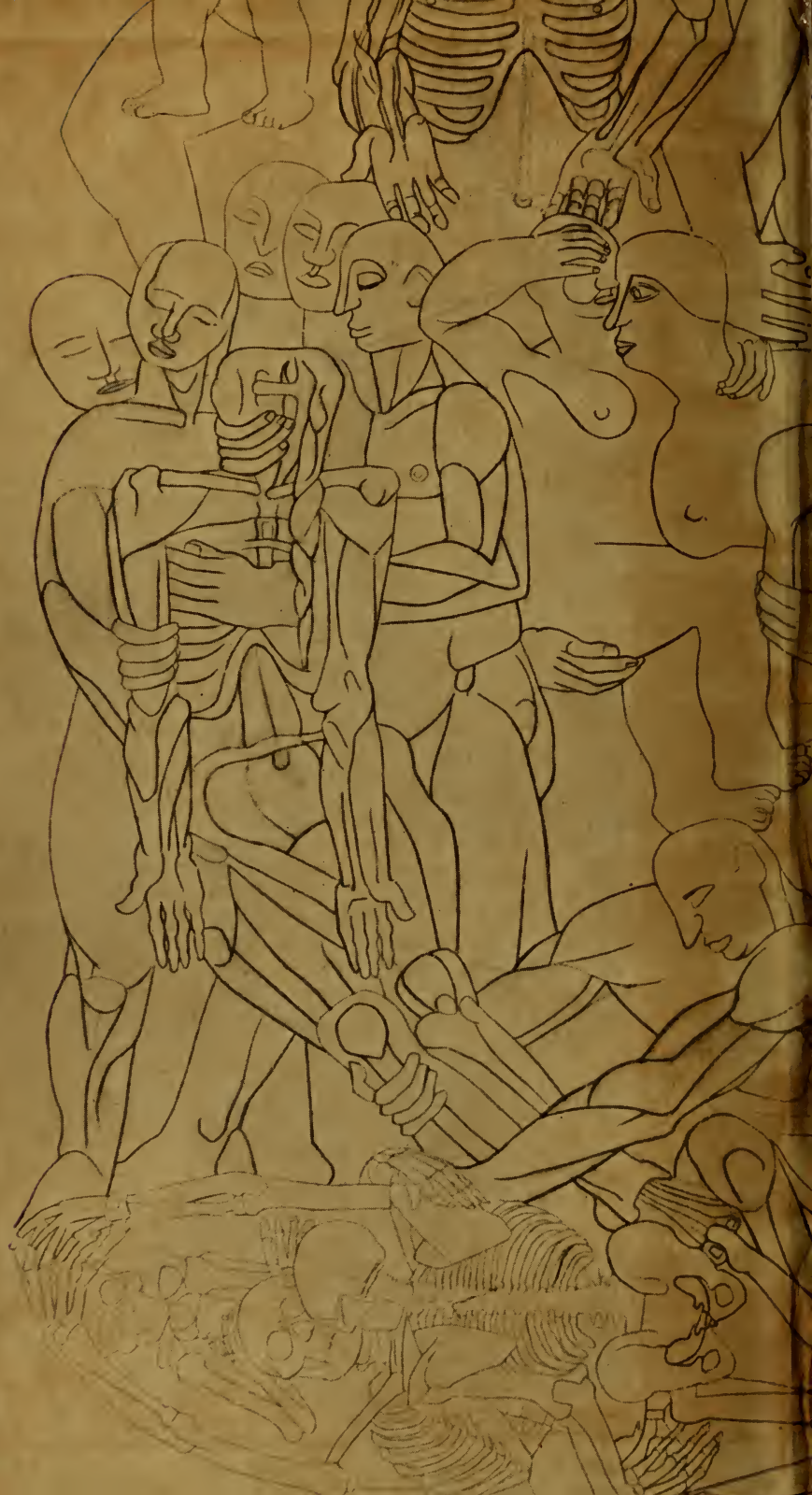


JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE





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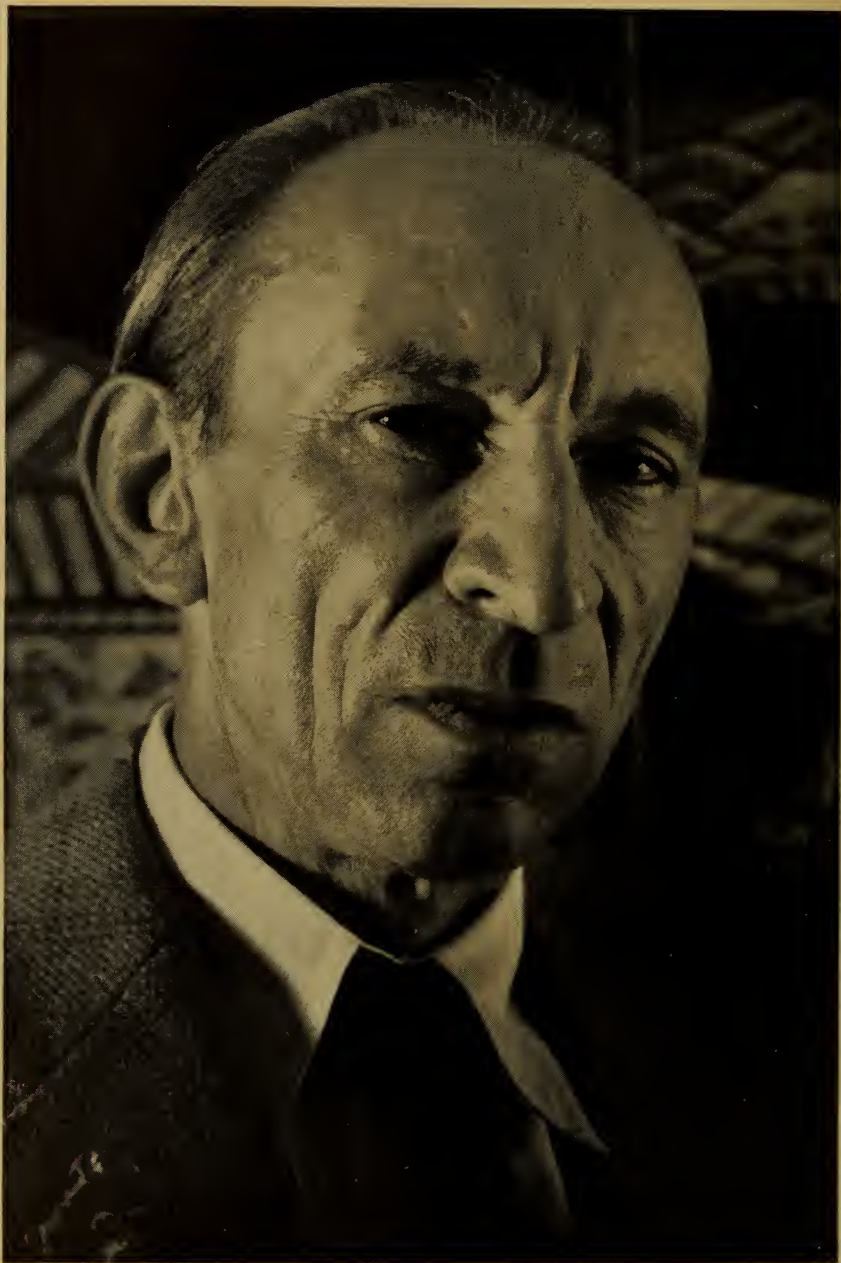
1939

JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR:
FOUNDATION OF MODERN ART



AMÉDÉE OZENFANT

Photo by Imogen Cunningham

director OZENFANT SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS, NEW YORK

*Pour mon cher Karl NIERENDORF
effectivement
Z. Ozenfant*

JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE

Experiences · Doubts · Certainties · Conclusions

by

AMEDÉE OZENFANT

Translated by

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and

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THE HILLA VON REBAY FOUNDATION
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DEDICATION

to

RONALD S. MORRIS

OUR FRIENDSHIP IS young, yet it already has its memories. One day in 1933 I heard a car pull up sharp outside my studio in Paris. Through my window I saw a young man, yourself, and a young woman, Charlotte, looking at the house next door, which was to let. You took the house. Then you came and worked at my Academy. Thus friendship began.

Do you remember that dinner party in the Avenue Reille when the duck—a french duck—would not cook properly?

You came back to live in London. The 1935 holidays saw us together under your roof at Bosham. Tennis, endless debates by the fireside listening in to Sir Henry Wood's Proms, and the icy weight that fell on our hearts every evening when the wireless brought us the disgraceful news of the Abyssinian War. . . .

Thanks to you, Ronald, I came at last to know England, that admirable country I had hardly glanced at two years before; England, that almost all Frenchmen know no more than if it were China—which, by the way, it resembles somehow, in one or two respects.

I do not know whether France is well thought of in the British Isles, but I do know now that England is, in France, marvellously unknown. So, towards the end of 1935 I came to live in London, near you, near Clive and your people.

I asked you to accept this book as a tribute. It is the book of my fiftieth year. *Art* came out in 1928. I had then said all I had to say. Should I have gone on parcelling out the same

ideas, like petty cash? I preferred to give writing a rest and let Time refill my batteries. It has fulfilled my hopes.

Here, then, is the story of four years of the world's life and of my own intellectual, artistic, moral, social life. Four years that were not easy years. You know how this book was written in the midst of widespread anxieties and great personal troubles. I have hardly touched upon the latter.

It is not a well-designed hand-book setting out methodically to prove a preconceived theory. It is a long experiment. And so I beg of you to start on it with a mind that is ready for change and development, and not to allow yourself to be checked by any early contradictions you may find. If, after all, you find coherence, it will mean that there is coherence in my nature and my thought.

Recollections are often written too late, when memory has begun to weaken. This book is the first instalment of my memoirs; four years of life, still hot.

OZENFANT

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BOOK I

1931

CAIRO—JERUSALEM—EPHESUS—ATHENS

CAIRO—JERUSALEM—EPHESUS

SPLENDID-ORDER-OF-THE-WORLD. Splendid-order-of-the-world. . . . To the rhythm of these big words, a step to each syllable, in the middle of the night, I tramped the ship's empty decks, breast to the wind, nose to the stars, in the best Chaldean shepherd manner. You can picture it! Egypt, now, could not be very far away. The first touch, the mere approach of the great land stirs you, wakens in you resounding words, rich with sonorous echoes. . . .

I had just got up. Still half asleep, I stared, bemused, at a curious constellation that had risen above the horizon. Huge circles, squares, triangles, an unnumbered, regular perspective of stars leading into the depths of the black night. Wonders! New wonders! Wonders of all time! I was most dangerously puffed up with splendour and infinity. Before these Oriental constellations, so well ordered, so harmonious, I enjoyed a spell that was deliciously Pythagorean, Platonic, Alexandrian, Ptolemaic, etc. It was Relativity's night off.

Unfortunately I was waking up. The eyes of the magus cleared. The spirit of criticism shook off the dream. I said to myself: "Stars don't line up in that military parade-ground fashion. . . ." I realised that my constellation was nothing but the lights of Alexandria in Egypt. . . .

Moral: order seems natural to us. It seems wholly natural because it gives us pleasure and our pleasure lies always in the fulfilment of our natural inclinations. Proof: the real stars seemed less real than the false. . . .

Come on! Let's make up our minds to be no more than men. Men: lovers of order, makers of order; and, whenever possible, of regulations.

Alexandria's lighthouse grew pale; the day broke; lateen sails glided by, white and with the gentle, drooping air of nuns of St. Vincent-de-Paul. We picked up our pilot. A lively

motor-boat circled round us at fifty miles an hour, presided over by a stout Egyptian gentleman. Between his fat fingers, ringed with jewels that sparkled in the rising sun, he held, majestically, a fat, heavily-banded cigar. This fine person, it seemed, was presenting his morning greetings to an elegant hetaira, ordered in France and now delivered to him, all her silk sails flying in the wind, upright in the ship's bow, a ship's figurehead, and who saluted the pasha, as yet unknown to her familiarly, by waving her gloves at him, Hollywood style.

We crossed the Delta at top speed. Osiris is sprouting; Isis helps his growth. As we pass, Typhon is already cutting his harvest. Beneath his sickles, Osiris falls and his limbs strew the earth with sheaves. The wheat that gives Egypt life. . . . Man has always loved to eat his gods; love takes the form of hunger, and our needs take the form of love.

All things, in time, fall into some sort of order; like the beginning of this book, that started out, it did not know whither. And so we will go on, not knowing, beforehand, where we shall get to—if we get anywhere. Shall we get anywhere?

Cairo Amidst the commercial houses, American, English, Italian, French, the surrounding desert thrusts its sandhills like ploughshares, straight into the town. The dunes are no more than tiny heaps of dust, but they are innumerable. It is quite likely that, one day, the sands will bury the houses. The thought gives you shivers down your back. Firstly because it suggests that the entire Universe is made of an incalculable number of infinitely small forces against which we can do almost nothing and on which our lives, at every moment of the day, depend; secondly because we always suffer at the idea of the existing ceasing to exist; we cannot even bear the thought that the earth will some day cease to be . . . ah! how deeply man loves eternity! Thirdly because, while we suffer at all times from the knowledge that things are defeated from the outset, it is peculiarly disagreeable to see them defeated by things lesser than themselves. We find it natural enough to see the victory go to the very big; that it

should go to the very small is highly shocking. Gods have always been pictured as greater than men; except in Greece where they are man's size, a circumstance that we find a little irritating. No one, anyway, has ever pictured God small as a flea or as a microbe.

Here, however, is something that will flatter our love of perpetuity, evidence of the astonishing permanence of man's body and man's mind. An hour in an eight-cylinder, brings us to Memphis. Is the Chrysler unseemly in this remoteness? Not a bit. Freed from their sand, the halls of the tombs are so utterly intact, the Man of All Time¹ has varied so slightly, if you compare him with his painted and carved effigies on the walls, that the car helps to make the ancient past present to us. The Bugatti-wheeled chariots of Tut-ankh-amen seem very modern, very technical and very fast; one would not be too surprised to see, among the hydraulic machinery—the apparatus for hoisting the boats' rigging, which is the same as ours—one of our own aeroplanes. The car has carried us here into the heart of Eternity, the only reality that is always up-to-date.

The Pyramid of Kheops and its sister, surnamed of Kephren, are still—oh yes they are, my blasé, clever little friends!—something worth looking at. Contrary to the assertion of certain philosophers, there are cases where quality resides in quantity. These monuments, on a small scale, would have but little quality. Facts like to tease philosophers.

At first sight the Pyramids, of course, are immense. And yet the mind has to adjust itself in order to appreciate their real proportions. It is accustomed to our foundations of small free-stone, of minute bricks; it does not realise at once that these foundations are close on eight feet high. Happily, time is a measure of space. You will judge of the Pyramid's enormous size if you watch a climber hauling himself athletically up—the bedouins pushing and pulling, pushing and pulling—growing smaller, smaller, coming, after what seems a very long time, to the top and waving a shining speck of dust,

¹ *Art*, p. 195 *et seq.*

which is his sun helmet. Triumphant he stands, proud as a louse, a tiny little pink louse against the blue. Presently the hero stops his flourishings. He lives one sublime moment, dreams of his puniness and of his death—perhaps for the first time.

The Pyramid of Kheops is half the height of the Eiffel Tower. Skyscrapers notwithstanding, it is a strange thing to reflect that if a stone of one cubic metre had been laid every day since 5000 B.C., the Great Pyramid would only just be finished. (A notice in the Centenary Museum of Brussels says so. There is poetry in statistics; there is poetry in everything.)

A film actor, ever so handsome, one hand à la Napoleon in his pretty sports jacket, points with the other to the Pyramids: "Simply marvellous! To think they are as old as Notre Dame!"

Perhaps the ravishing youth imagines that the cathedrals are as old as the Pyramids? This shows, at least, that antiquity's great works of art can give emotion apart from their historic background. It also proves the opposite, for history is an element in the actor's excitement. Here should be twelve pages on Illusion, the positive value of the negative, etc. etc. But I'll spare you that.

Alas! The Pyramids are crumbling. . . . You people of America! You who can do so much through your technical skill, your daring, your real desire for greatness, you who have beaten the record of the Eiffel Tower with your Chryslers and your Empire State Building, here is a task worthy of you! Send 6,000 unemployed to Sakkara and give this giant ruin back its brilliant coat, its glass-bright surface. That, indeed, would be a grand work! Picture the eye's unchecked flight over the vast triangles, the clear, relentless edges speeding from the sand to the sky, to the sun, mingling with the blue space or with the milky mirror of the moon. . . . The Pyramids were intended to remain eternally new; their decay is unfitting. (But leave the Sphinx alone. She has been disturbed enough already, first in Kheops' day and then in the days of Portland cement. We are not even sure of what she was like in the beginning.) You can't go wrong over the Pyramids. Restore!

(*Note* 1934. M. Pochan, professor at the French school at Cairo, says that the Pyramids were coloured in red ochre. This, pending further information, wrecks an illusion. It is a warning against restoring. And it suggests that one should preserve one's critical sense even in one's exaltations. But let us get excited just the same! It is useful and agreeable, if not harmless. Without enthusiasm, one would not make a step forward.)

You Americans, you might engrave and gild an epitaph on some granite tablet. It could be written in one of the dead languages, the language of a people who thought of human eternity, a tongue more permanent perhaps than your transient tongue, made only for transacting business. . . .

Pyramids of the mighty Kheops
 Kephren and Mykerinos
 They conquered the centuries
 But the foolishness and greed of men
 Ruined them at last
 In the reign of President Roosevelt
 And of the dollar
 We, the Americans, whose Metal Age
 Will leave no sign of greatness
 Except mounds of rust
 We restored the Pyramids
 A people died that they might live
 We Americans
 Who built only for the day
 Restored them so that we might at last
 Make a lasting thing.

The Sphinx's claws hook into the soil; her level look gazes abstractedly into the spaces of the sky.

The Sphinx: Feet on the earth, head high. Hold fast to the real; aim at eternity.

Duly noted. A counsel of valour! Thank you.

BL

A commentary. Egypt lived her millenniums of life obsessed by the thought of death. As a singular result of this obsession, whereas the notion of man's impermanence led India to Nirvana, it awakened in Egypt a need for great and noble efforts. To the Egyptians, death was the only enduring life. As an offering to it, they made huge and splendid things. At Karnak there is an inscription:

. . . the great Temple
Strong as the sky.
Bear witness you who come after
These stones are here for all time.

These "houses of eternity", made of "eternal stone", should, indeed, have been more lasting than the hills; as geometric shapes they offered less hold to time and weather. But the folly of the decadent years comes periodically to spoil the inheritance of the great years. The Pyramids served as quarries to the citizens of Cairo—just as the marbles of the Parthenon provided the Turks with lime—and then the curio dealers came and cleared everything away.

See how admirably the men of the old Nile knew how to exploit, like true men, the awful fatality of death. At the sight of the great works that their hands had wrought, they became aware of the fine things man can do, though life is short, if he can will, if he can look high and give himself altogether, body and soul, to his object. Out of the prodigious moral power of these stones, piled up by the men of the Nile, came a new confidence, a trust in the powers of man. A hopefulness was born and a challenge to other men. And through the years this pessimism transmuted into optimism shone upon the world. To it we owe the Acropolis, and Rome's virile monsters, and St. Sophia, and the Mosque of Cordova. India and no doubt China and possibly America's ancient Mexico and Peru also played the game of Bearing Witness. The Gothic initiate masons had a round against the Arabian and Egyptian wonders. The sport has not been entirely lost; it is with its records in

mind that Berlin and New York and Moscow raise buildings that they would like to be the greatest, the most beautiful, the most enduring in the world. As for France . . . Since the Eiffel Tower—(although, of course, certain street erections, produced by the Office of Works, are very like their Roman counterparts and infinitely grander, lovelier, purer)—what great things have we attempted?

A man can be truly great only if he sacrifices everything to the works that will survive him. For this reason the thought of death, far from instilling lethargy, inertia, should provoke a man, if he is not made of putty, to rebellion. Rebellion against death gives the spring necessary for our conquest of despair by action.

I will come back here some day. For the moment I have got what I wanted. I feel stirred up, optimistic. Prudently I leave Egypt. It is not good to live too long with the dead.

Here they are again, the myths, the myths. . . . Off Jaffa, to a rock above the sea, says Pliny, Andromeda was chained by the jealous Nereids. She had dared to compete with them in a beauty contest. The poor girl's situation was extremely precarious, the more so that a Neptunian monster prowled about her, coveting her beauty with his jaws. But the divine, the handsome, the valiant Perseus, astride dazzling Pegasus, coveted her with his heart, and in other ways. He loosed her chains and married her. Here Noah went into his Ark, and here again, in these same sensational waters, Jonah had his submarine adventure. Landing is still a delicate affair. Andromeda's rocks guard the coast, forbidding the approach of all large vessels. To go ashore you must allow yourself to be kidnapped in a handsome, romantically painted caïque. You leap from the ship's ladder into the arms of genuine Delacroix pirates who carry you off to the rhythm of their ten long oars, dipping to a tune the rhythm of the sea gave them. The monotonous chanting, old as antiquity itself, quickens and slackens at the sea's will, waits, yields, until the moment when the strong beat of the wave releases the strong heave of the muscles that conquer it. Bonaparte, coming

ashore, was compelled to yield impatiently to the same natural laws. A good lesson. The art of life consists in satisfying one's needs while submitting to necessity. Otherwise you get nowhere, not even to Jaffa.

Forgive me for dropping like this into fable. Think of the fables that have come out of Palestine! . . . The world still lives on them.

Reason, Sun of the world? Rather a modest riding-light directing our paltry little movements in the darkness that we call our days. And yet we cannot do without reason. Before we can act, reason must define and therefore limit. I feel the need of fathoming the unreasoned impulses that the world's constant wonders induce in me. Yet to do this, to escape from the enchantment, the mystical stupor that makes me melt into the universe but that explains nothing, I must condense the warm delicious clouds and gather them into a space that my reason's eyes can see. For we continue to hug the hope that by applying reason dispassionately to every fact we will some day succeed in snatching from the "secret of things" a spark of the true light that is absolutely and for ever forbidden to us. And when I have duly brought down my pantheistic ardours to reason's measure, nothing is left of that fine blaze but a handful of ash. . . . Yet, with a little imagination, the ash is still a precious reality. . . .

To reason is to rationalise. That is all we do when we fancy that we understand. Even the superstitious, declaring that a will-o'-the-wisp is the soul of a dead man, rationalise. To attribute to a phenomenon a definitely miraculous character is a sort of positivism. It comes from the refusal to remain in ignorance, the wish for a precise explanation. Many superstitious folk are naïve rationalists who do not know themselves.

At least we have, with Auguste Comte, dematerialised our images of Reality—man and the world.¹

¹ *Note 1931.* And we shall have to alter them again. Niels Bohr, father of the "Bohr's atom", pattern of the atomic planetary system on which modern theories of the atom were based, has just said: "My atom has become a child's toy" (Congress of Rome, 1931).

Attraction, love, repulsion, hate, our strengths, our weaknesses, our happiness, our despair, our ardours, our passions—we picture them in the form of waves that multiply and increase, or contradict, or neutralise each other. A turmoil of vital waves whose discordance makes our misery and whose harmony makes our joy. All very symbolical, yet well in the spirit of the country I am in, of the thinkers who first created the notion of a Universe that was a vast system of symbols. God, in the singular or in the plural, He of Israel, they of Greece, or He of our own homes who came from Jerusalem, Creator, Will, First Cause, Chance—capital-lettered words of mighty tonnage. . . . But was a Creator necessary?¹

Chemistry of our cells, digesting the sun's rays; sharp vibrato of other worlds; swarming rumours of the marshes; amorous odours of fertile soils; aphrodisiac smell of plant-life; strange wanderings of the earth's creatures, from the sea to the sky, of beasts whose blood is white and cold or red and hot like ours, moved by love and hunger, dying in dumb fortitude or with a cry; silence of the night; all silence; the magnificent violence of the winds, the lightnings and ozones of storms; the slow phosphorescence of the ocean's depths; the odd, quasi-human ways of certain bodies so-called inanimate: phosphorous playing at Prometheus; the joys, the pains . . . Why?

Questions, questions. . . . Their calls reach down into the darkness of our ignorance and there increase in resonance and send back echoes that we take for the beginnings of an answer. For habit tells us that answer often follows question, and so, at the sound of the one we almost think we hear the other.²

¹ See *Art*, p. 184.

The author, who is too much of a relativist to be vain, asks forgiveness for these references to his other works. He considers that this method is the only one for sparing his readers excessive repetition. *Journey Through Life* is the sequel to *Art*. In fact the earlier works of an author are the prefaces of his later works. Or should be.

Art was published in 1928 (Paris: Jean Budry); in an English translation by J. Rodker entitled "Foundations of Modern Art", in 1930 (London: Rodker; New York: Brewer, Warren, Putnam); in a German translation by Gertrude Grohmann entitled "Leben und Gestaltung", in 1931 (Berlin: Muller und I. Kiepenheuer).

² This idea will be treated more fully later, in connection with the Parthenon.

The legend and the void spaces of Israel are extraordinarily moving. The land itself seems to tell us, in terms as forceful as the storm that is coming up now, El Greco-like over Zion, that we know nothing, nothing at all, nothing of the deeps of life and very little of the surface. I have never witnessed a religious miracle, but there is one first-class miracle that I am constantly observing and that makes the others seem no more than tittle-tattle, and that is the persistent, utter mystery of the Real.

Four of us were in the Buick. Suddenly, at the bend of the road, there appeared, in the distance, the bleak Dead Sea. My throat tightened and I found myself sobbing. Much embarrassed by such shocking behaviour in the presence of strangers, I invented some story about a painful speck of dust in my eye—twenty centuries of Judaism and Christianity in my heart.

I have strong nerves and cry with difficulty. Your nerves must be stronger even than mine if you can look without emotion of any kind on the few places where, in a few decisive moments, humanity determined its future. Personally I am always overwhelmed. Memphis, Athens, Rome, Paris, Moscow—Try, standing on the Mount of Olives, to look coolly at the Holy City, lying there beyond the valley of Jehoshaphat. Try to whistle a rumba. You will not be able to. Or if you do, you will feel guilty, base, unhappy. The songs that rise spontaneously in you are the sacred songs. It is a fact. This city, Jerusalem, has the historical property of making you lose your reason. There are plants, gases, substances, ideas, sounds, shapes, places that make you lose your reason. Even now, as I gaze at it, the thousand shining domes of the holy town sway and swim before me. Is it a convulsion of the tragic earth, a quaking like that which shook the valley, broke open the tombs, when Jesus, the human god, died? Or is it that the smoke of the incense burned by the multitude of rival Christian sects, day and night throughout the centuries, about the Temple, wrapping it in their ardours and their enmities, makes the air tremble above Zion? No. The mirage is caused

quite simply by the rising of the over-heated air itself. Our lovely illusions soon find other illusions to disturb them, to neutralise or wipe them out. There would be no mirage if there were no eyes; and what a strange reality is this that we perceive only as a mirage. . . .

Many travellers come back disappointed from the Holy Land. A passing motor hid the Gospels from them. Yet I saw in a few hours several Flights to Egypt and I don't know how many other Biblical or Koranic scenes. I cannot say that a particular church on the Mount of Olives is not built, very regrettably, in the style of the Decorative Art Exhibition 1925. And of course those damnable Orthodox Russians have put theatre stuff everywhere, even in the Holy Sepulchre. But nothing, neither the new-made horrors nor the English police 'plane that circles over the town, can quiet me. And anyway, very little imagination is required to adopt a sort of projected archaeological view and so provide the present with the prestige that it will have a few hundred years hence when the 'plane will stand side by side with the Roman chariot, a guileless, innocent affair, and the oil-pump, restored according to the best authorities, will seem decently primitive in the "early origins" section of the museum. It is a poor imagination that is sterilised instead of stimulated by facts. The olive trees on the sacred hill are museum pieces. Nevertheless it is here, beside the forefathers of these trees, that legend shows us—sorrowful, preparing Himself for death—Jesus. Whether He lived or not, it is from this spot, while the Romans gave men to the lions, that sprang the idea of Brotherhood—a novelty so formidable that it destroyed Rome and changed the world from end to end. And will change it farther.

My lyric soul is well under way. Here is Jerusalem. In the past, milliards of men have believed, myriads of men still believe, that here lived, smiled, taught and died for the redemption of the world the Jew Jeshoua, the saviour Jehovah, the mild and charitable Jesus, the Lavoisier of our hearts.¹

Jesus, incarnation of Good. Judas, incarnation of Evil.

¹ Lavoisier was the discoverer of oxygen.

Simple, even crude pictures. Yet so much faith, so much credulity, the legend's immeasurable consequences, overpower you. I have never felt anything much at Bougival.

A young woman is praying at the Holy Sepulchre. She rises to her feet. She seems distressed. It is plain that she wants someone to confide in. Seeing me, she says:

"I said to Him—Father, I do not feel that You are here!"

"Why? Why is He not here?"

"When God is with me tears come into my eyes."

She, the good Christian, had said everything there was to say. She had said that faith's reasons are in the irrational, in the complex entity known as the heart and the nerves. All arguments in favour of faith fall short. You take it or leave it, for to believe is to know.¹

In spite of priests and decorators, the irrational flows passionately from the haunting, bewildering stones of the city, from the Wailing Wall (Judaism: our religion's folk-lore), from the pavement of the Temple, where so much blood was spilt. What an appalling power has faith that is utterly blind, incapable of seeing its extremest contradictions! Listen to the Crusader Foucher of Chartres, historian of the First Crusades, witness of a fine exploit of the Love-thy-neighbours:

"Ten thousand Saracens were massacred in the Temple. Whoe'er stood in that place had his ankles dyed in the blood of the slaughtered. No heathen escaped. The women and the little children were not spared."²

Collective madness makes poetry of the Mosque of the Caliph Omar, built on the rock, says legend, where Abraham, seeking to please God, raised his knife against Isaac, his son.

"By tradition, it was often held that the mountain on which the temple was built was the same mountain as that whereon Abraham, in ancient times, offered his son in sacrifice." So

¹ *Art*, p. 173.

² *Note 1937*. Jean Vertex in the *Petit Parisien*: "On the day of the Assumption, having killed several thousand Spaniards, his African troops having slaughtered 3,000 of the anti-Christian republicans, defenders of Badajoz, Franco-the-Christian was present at a mass given in honour of the 'Soldier of Christ . . .' In Aragon and between Cordova and Grenada, the wounded are despatched in the name of Christ the King."

says Racine in the preface to *Athalie*. I like the references of the poets. Since they do not profess to be the truth, they do not betray it. They take the absurd in their stride. And the effects of a work of art are realities beyond cavil. On fancies such as these, on the Gospels, on the thousand-and-one enchanting Jewish and Christian tales, the world has lived for twenty centuries. (Which is what I meant just now, at Jaffa.)

The Mosque of Omar, then, is built on this decidedly miraculous rock. Here Mahomet, knowing that his time was come, mounted the purest and whitest of his pure white steeds, the mare El Bourak, a gift of the Angel Gabriel. The beautiful creature rose into the clouds, carrying the prophet on high to "talk business with God". Since that day the Mahomedans believe that the rock is suspended between earth and heaven.

The builders of this perfect dome, their souls' poem, had the audacity to keep the famous rock, in its natural state, beneath it. In their mingling of crude matter and artistic abstraction, the same strong contrast is at work that gives the Old Testament its power and its poetry. In the Bible, material of the grossest sort and the dreamiest of abstractions meet and magnify each other. A similar result is seen on the rock of the Acropolis where exquisitely sensitive and intelligent temples are enthroned upon matter. It appears again in the arts of Corinth, Rome, Byzance, and in Romance Art and Gothic Art where abstract curves react among natural foliage—lotus, acanthus and salads. The same effect was sought but missed in the new basilica of the Credo on the Mount of Olives, beside the grotto where, the Gospels tell us, Christ taught His disciples. And again there is the same desire to match the corporeal with the incorporeal in the Church of the Ecce Homo whose roof over-arches, with less simplicity, a hundred metres of the Roman road that Christ trod if He died upon the Cross.

Memories of many roads . . . Sorrowful Way of Calvary, Via Appia, Sacred Way of Athens, Way of the Potters' Tombs

in the Ceramicus; and the modest Paris street, rue de la Tombe-Issoire, that had been a Roman road, leading from Rome to the City, trodden by the legions before Joan of Arc came to it and Lenin, who lived close by in the rue Beaunier and the rue Marie-Rose. And the airway, over the Ocean and under the Milky Way, towards New York. . . .

It is evident that this last passage has little rational meaning.
Pure sentiment.

One must feel in order to believe.

Must one believe in order to feel?

Is belief so unimportant?

Is feeling unimportant?

To feel the emptiness and the silence of the desert . . .
A breath speaks here, wordless yet imperative. Such messages are rare in towns; the hubbub stifles them. Only once, in Paris, have I felt a spell that was serene, sturdy, strong, pure as this one: on Armistice Night. United, the people greeted, not victory but Peace on earth for all men. I have no idea what the "voice of the desert" says to Jews or Arabs, but I know that it is strangely stirring to a European. It makes his personal concerns seem small and unimportant. By this victory over our egoism, we come back stronger from the desert, more fitted to mix with our fellows, more prepared for heroism; bigger men.

Leaving the desert I found that the man I had been had vanished. If you go there, say to yourself, at the moment your ship weighs anchor: "Farewell myself, such as I am."

In the velvety, midnight silence of the Asia Minor seas, the hollow dome of the sky joins its reflection in the waters, a perfect sphere. We float in the starry bowl as though in emptiness, at the centre of stellar space, caressed by a thousand immaterial streams. Nothing has substance. The world is no more than a trembling of luminous waves dispersed throughout the Universe, sharp and vibrant as new love.

We are nearing Smyrna. From the town's regularly spaced lights, I built it in my mind as the postcards used to show it:

white in the sunshine, voluptuously offered, stretched out on fine slopes among groves of cypresses. But this view is out of date as I discovered in the morning. The War came and cut down the cypresses. Since 1922 Smyrna has gone. Izmir is growing up. If the bodies of Nature were, like names, at the mercy of men, the city would be no more than a sort of Nice.

Not far away is Phocaea, linking France, by way of Marseilles, to the land of Homer and, in a fabulous rebound, to Greece; which is always a pleasant thought, I don't quite know why.

Anaxagoras, who knew as much as we do but not more, was born somewhere about here. On Mt. Pagus, Alexander, whacked after a day's hunting, lay down to sleep beneath a plane tree, by the Temple of Nemesis. He dreamed that the goddess bade him make Smyrna beautiful. Nowadays generals dream more often of punishment and destruction.¹

Towards Ephesus. Vast ponds, strewn as far as the eye can see with nostalgic water-lilies, sleep a heavy, heart-breaking sleep. Aïa-Solouk, with its little local railway station, is a small village sprung up on the ruins of Ephesus. Square white stones, Rebeccas at the well, prehistoric huts of rough wattle, inhabited by a vague species of human creature, on the soil that nourished Heracleitus and my colleagues Parrhasios and Appelles . . .

Must one sweat over the ruins of ruins where nothing real lingers? No, but I like day-dreaming over them. Scratch away, you brave Italian archaeologists, scratch hard under the torrid sun! A nice plan of your diggings, in Paris, will do me quite well. I leave my companions to torture their livers alone, beneath their beautiful pith helmets, and lie down in the shade of a harmless triumphal arch, the only sign of antiquity still upright in the deserted valley. A number of black goats are rummaging in the debris of crumbled temples, scraps of mosaic, potsherds, splinters of marble and rare

¹ Note 1937. Mussolini and Hitler are "punishing" Spain. Japan is "punishing" China.

ophite, fragments of iridescent beads—all that is left of loveliness, of offerings, of sacred things. Overhead, vultures beat all gliding records; flights of ravens turn and turn about a ruined minaret. A Scriptural ass, ridden by a young Jew, proceeds through this ass's paradise, pausing at frequent intervals to nibble a prime thistle. Gigantic flowering thistles abound. Jesus and his donkey grow smaller and smaller, disappear in a fold of the ground, reappear, smaller than ever, beyond a clump of grasses, vanish into the opalescent sea air. The breeze carries away the soft, winged down of shrubs that only rocks have fed. Their sturdiness preaches the virtues of asceticism. Camel drivers meditate in the shadows of their meditative camels. Like the camel drivers, I muse, stretched out on the hot earth—an excellent means, recommended by the Greeks (the Antaeus system), of participating in the Universe and of gaining strength.

Nothing is left but the temples' outlines to tell of the colossal size of the holy place. The whole world of antiquity came here to worship Artemis, that very exclusive goddess, virgin, somewhat severe in temper, lover of the hills and forests. With her brother Apollo, the huntress led the Muses' chorus; (a good example: obey the spirit and obey the senses). This was her temple, the seventh wonder of the world, the biggest attraction of this vast Fun Fair that Erostratus wanted to destroy. Now there is the scorched bush, the sky, and a lagoon full of reeds. In place of the rotting marshes was a mighty harbour. By one of those decrees that man does not issue, the sea drew away from the promontory's arms; the harbour died; trade perished. Long before the sea went, Artemis had gone, and her name had become exactly nothing but a means of making money. The priests of the pagan Lourdes sold indulgences to their pagan flock at so much a go. Also amulets, useful talismans, "Ephesia Grammata", tricks. St. Paul came to "give" the holy word and kick the sacred pedlars in the pants. The gratuitous has a certain style, a certain charm. At all times there have been too many folk in religion and in politics who grow rich on the beliefs of others, on the ideals and the terrors of their

followers. The gods end up as business men and too many priests as bank-messengers.

"The royal printers of Great Britain are suing a publishing firm," I read, "for infringement of copyright. The English Crown holds all rights in the printing of the Bible. It has granted these rights to three institutions, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the royal printers. In 1930, 35,000,000 Bibles were sold in the British Empire. Recent statistics show that the Bible has never sold so plentifully as at the present time. The Scriptures are now published in 651 different languages, including the new languages that have been added to the list this year: Atche, Tumbaka, Momvu, Dakkarkari, Shamba, Guarani, Marovo, Rubuka, Roviana, Nuba, Mota, Karre, Iregwe, Fiji and Efe."

It is true that the Bible is one of the few things that are sometimes given for nothing. At the Paris Exhibition of 1900 I was a kid. By the gate known as the "Salamander" gate, a tall, solemn-looking gent, dressed in black, stiff and dignified in his monumental collar, walked slowly along. As he went he dropped, as though by chance, a stream of little red books: Bibles. I picked one up. I treasured my gift from heaven. But it soon vanished; the sacred writings have a bad name in Roman Catholic families.

ATHENS

IN THE NIGHT of the 25th-26th September 1930, I was on the Aegean Sea, off the Greek islands. Every now and then I got out of my bunk to look at the weather; it was threatening, the waves were rising. For months past the sun had reigned gloriously; we had forgotten what a cloud was like. But now the Rain-Spirit, taking advantage of the sun's absence on the other side of the globe, was trying its luck. My luck! Day was breaking, a wet, woolly, stuffed-up, snivelling day. And I was so wretched, so wretched. I was going to see Athens from under an umbrella. . . .

Suddenly, up comes the sun!

Heralded by a bombardment of violent colours and a terrific, spinning tornado of light, the sun springs on the fat rebel clouds gathered below the horizon, seizes and thrashes them. In these parts the sun is the mightiest of the powers, Apollo himself, they say. From his head flames flash forth and make a rush attack upon the clouds, setting fire to the tails of the air-rebels, so that they scatter in vivid bursts of scarlet. Quieted, the golden god climbs majestically up. A few small leaden or greenish stragglers, who had not quite grasped the situation, fly at his second glance, and not a trace of disorder lingers in the vast reconquered spaces of the sky. The Push has failed.

The headlands open like fans. White island yields to white island. We have passed the pillars of Sunion, "the sign-posts of Attica", and are sailing by a long, gently modulated coast.

"What island is that?" I ask of a proud-looking Greek lady. She says, or rather chants: "E-gi-na. . . ."

Stressing the E, dropping with the g, climbing sharply upward with the i, falling slowly away between the n and the a, her voice seems to follow the profile of the land, that rises

suddenly out of the sea, climbs sharp as an i, and, at the end of its crescendo, falls and sinks into the waters.

I am on the look out for Athens.

There she is! Sliding swiftly from the farthest headland, like a 'plane from a ship's catapult, the Acropolis takes off directly she stands out from the end of the shore. She carries her pagan monstrosity on her brow. You see it, minute yet perfectly clear in the transparent air. Like a star in the circle of a telescope, it shivers in the port-hole. Most astronomical. The colours of the columns are mauve, saffron, pale sapphire—the same as the pearly tones of Venus and of Mars. To the naked eye the Parthenon is still extremely small, and glasses make very little difference. A clear, true gesture can annihilate space. A cross, an aeroplane in mid-sky, the light of a beacon—from whatever distance you see them, they are always themselves. So it is with the Archetype-Temple. Although it grows slowly bigger with the ship's slow advance, although, on the Piræus-Athens motor-track, it grows visibly, vanishing at a bend of the road to reappear close at hand, majestic above the hollow of a street, its identity is unchanged. The effect of a Type depends, not on its size but only on its form. Perfection may not be of this world, yet there are works that give us the illusion of perfection. They can be made larger without losing their completeness, without altering their nature. Where matter achieves a "perfection", matter seems to become spirit. And so it is on the Acropolis.

Great white silence of the city of Athens. . . . In the lap of the lovely hills it sheds its pallor, as of sails, over the valley; as a Dreadnought towers above a fleet of fishing-boats—the Parthenon.

I was conquered at the first glance. Fatigue was gone and the great heat and hunger and thirst. It draws you to it; you must go.

Do not expect to get from the Doric Parthenon an agreeable entertainment such as a dilettante enjoys, taking his time, tasting his pleasure, plucking a charm here, a charm there, composing his nosegay of delights, as he would at the exquisite Erechtheion, that Eastern gynæceum of the male Acropolis.

The eyes follow the powerful, rhythmic up-springing of the marble, the strong flights, the tensions and sudden relaxations, the repetitions that reinforce and the oppositions that magnify, compensate or correct each other, the themes and the variations on these themes, and the variations of the variations, the glissandos and staccatos, the mighty increase of speed and the slow quieting; the prolonged caresses and the sudden halts—But this pleasure has no end. It begins again and again wherever the eye may fall.

Paradise of Transpositions. . . .

The ears seem to hear a music great as the sonorities of the great elementary forces—storms, eruptions, tempests on the sea and on the mountain, in the forest—but in gales that come evenly, like the music of the ocean's waves when a strong wind stirs them and they rise evenly, regularly . . . such are the columns of the temple.

Our sense of touch is also satisfied. A finger passed over the stone enjoys the sweep of its shape, the delicious grain of the marble, feels the increase of heat as it goes from the shadow to the sun-scorched spaces—tactile images that the eye interprets as a melodious passage from dark to light. Point by point, moment by moment, the finger seems to transpose the visual melody into a felt melody.

Our ears seem to hear the same song as the song perceived by our touch and our sight.

Our geometric sense agrees with and enjoys the tension of the unbroken shape, its pride.¹

Our moral sense receives the impression of a good deed.

So here we have already several important points:

- (1) The action of a rich and powerful work is not restricted to the sense organs that perceive it but spreads to other senses.
- (2) There is a music for each of our senses.
- (3) An internal machinery transposes in us the various data provided by the senses, combines and unites them into a homogeneous figure.
- (4) Every sensation induces a mental feeling and a moral

¹ *Art*, p. 236. The pride of a motor valve, etc. . . .

judgment (the curve that was felt and judged to have pride, etc.).

(5) The geometric sense has its sensibility, its music, its feeling (an elegant curve).

There are even cases where the senses of smell and taste have their own music, and where these senses also affect the spirit. One cannot look at a rose or at the colour rose without imagining that one smells it. It may happen that one hears with one's eyes, as, for example, when the sight of a puff of smoke, issuing from a gun, makes one fancy, instantly, that one hears the explosion. And the words we read silently, if we pay attention we are aware that we hear them. If this were not so there would be no possibility of poetry, except poetry that is read aloud. Etc.

Let us go a little further:

The Parthenon is essentially a symphony in perspectives.

Its plan is as simple as anything.

But simplicity is fertile only if it is the simple principle of an effective complexity. For instance, far from being content, as an insensitive geometrician would have been, with a purely mechanical pegging-out of his ground plan, Ictinos skilfully modified the spacing of the columns according to their position in the perspective. He knew that the angular columns would be "eaten" by the light. And so, in order to make them appear equal to the others, he enlarged them sufficiently to compensate for the optical illusion. The end columns of all buildings of this kind have the appearance of giving way beneath the directional pressure of the pediments; Ictinos sloped his columns and as it were buttressed them. Moreover, he contrived that the chief lines should be not really straight but subtly arched so that, in spite of the deformations produced by the light or by the gaps, and by the reactions of the shapes nearby that would make them appear bent, they appear, in fact, firmly rectilinear. He made the vast pavement slightly convex in order that it might not seem to be collapsing. And I was forgetting. Not one of the columns is vertical. Each axis actually converges towards an ideal point in space.

Yet everything seems straight, vertical and parallel. And this cunning perspective appears perfectly to confirm the classic laws: "Objects of equal size seem to grow smaller in proportion as they are further removed"; and: "In a correct perspective, vertical lines remain vertical." So, to make these abstract laws function with apparent perfection, certain elements of reality must be adjusted to fit the aberrations of our senses; that is to say—following the laws of so-called normal perspective—we must alter them.

So one may say: In contradiction to the law, in order that a perspective should seem regular, it is sometimes necessary that certain of its elements should be irregular. And again: There are circumstances in which a vertical, in order to look vertical, must not be so.

In this place the foot-rule never reigned, or the compass, or the square, or the unfeeling "letter". By the use of skilful expedients, contrived by reason and comprehending—here, both the reasoning of the mind and of the sensibility—we have the feeling that we are "living" a perfection, a perfection that is alive and singing and as though fashioned to our desires.

Another moral: Everything that exists in this world, whether made by nature or by art or by machinery, if it would please the human trinity: heart, senses, reason, must obey certain laws that are in us. The constellations of Alexandria had told us that already. And if the laws (or reality) are to be effective, they must be interpreted.

That night at the hotel I read Mr. But (I'll introduce him to you one of these days) the notes you have just been reading.

"My good man," said he, "every decorator, every stage or garden or cinema designer plays with illusion just as much as your Ictinos. Tricks of that sort aren't really astonishing."

"Mr. But. It isn't the illusion itself that astonishes me. It is the use it has been put to. When decorators afflict us with bad scenery they are misusing magic, as many magicians do. Yet art is illusion and magic. The aforesaid decorators cheat the eye, just like Ictinos. They even cheat the brain with tricks that Vignole codified and called Scenography and that

lead to a superior understanding of the True. As a matter of fact, if you knew a little more about artists and painters and decorators, or even about their humble assistant craftsmen, you would know that the habit of seeing a little spot of grey mud on a piece of sacking become, perhaps, the loveliest of skies on a canvas or a backcloth, induces in them relativist feelings and views on the spiritual aspects of 'reality' that put them a damned sight higher in the philosophic scale than your man in the street for whom everything is what it is and that's that."

"Maybe," said Mr. But. "Yet when I was on the Acropolis I didn't hear that great long speech you say you have taken down. The Parthenon is a fine thing. Of course it is! I feel that all right. But . . . But . . ."

"You didn't hear the Parthenon's discourse? Its philosophies? Its music? Well, well. As someone—I forget who—once said to me, a man will get out of a work of art as much and no more than he bargained for. I have the impression, though, that when you look at a work of art you deliberately shut your mind to its suggestion. You don't want to be a mug. And in the matter of art you have a little old prejudice against the intellect. You're not the only man who believes that artists are just arms that carve or paint.

"Never mind. I'm sure that when you go to the lovely rock again to-morrow, you'll feel more strongly. To feel helps one to understand, and to awaken understanding leads to feeling. That is the secret of all the true teachers."

Early next morning Mr. But and I climbed the Acropolis. It was perfect.

The sea air from beyond Salamina set its salt crystals on my lips, whistled on the sharp edges of the flutings, hummed in the hollows of the marble. A pearly light lent vibrations named after the names of creatures and of flowers—salmon pink, periwinkle blue, lilac, and in the shadows velvety hyacinth tones—as though to bind what Nature had created to the creations of Art.

Sensuous moments of the Acropolis, abstract moments, moments of the heart. . . . One can no longer distinguish between them; in this place the three are one. It seemed that on this terrace everything that had always been lacking was given to me and everything that had been unknown was revealed, as in a great love that satisfied the senses and the heart and the mind.

No doubt these engrossing Beings do no more, in reality, than blot out the memory of our unanswered questions and cravings, thus giving us, with forgetfulness of our shortcomings and of our ignorances, the illusion of knowledge and of plenitude. Divine forgetfulness. . . .

Yet art is still an amazing means of attaining knowledge. When you are on the Acropolis, you people who are reading this, surrendered to the Parthenon—docile as a crowd to the leader who excites, subdues, directs it with the music of his voice, the poetry of his words, the power of his arguments—you will feel a passion, a trembling, a sense of looking upon mystery such as I felt in days gone by when my young mind discovered, one by one, those things that made vivid the magic prospects of the world. Small we were, with surprise and wonder, our hearts stretched wide as the universe, before the first flashes of the lightning, the first fall of snow, the first sight of the sea, the first touch of the leaping water, the first lizard, its quick heart beating on the newly whitewashed wall that shimmered in the bright waves of an Easter sun, in the scent of the pine-trees. And the amorous violence of the speckled cock, hot with early-spring ardours, the first rainbow, the first windmill, the first sight of a chick breaking its shell and stepping out already skilled in living, the first newborn brother, the strange living world that swarmed in the grass beneath our first steps, the first look into the microscope at the life of infusoria, or into the aquarium at the fish that subsist without air; the first moving pictures of the sea's depths, the tales of three-masters sunk among the sea-forests, the first submarine, the first volcano, the first climb into white

silence, the first speed race on the road (and later in the air); the first olive tree rustling with bees on the first day in Provence, the first corpse, the first glimpse of stars in a telescope: the Moon, Saturn, the Milky Way, the nebulae where worlds were born, they said; the first echo sending our young voices back to us in the valley, as though it was another's; the first naked woman, our very first loves, the first echo that our hearts gave forth and the wait for its second coming; the day when the thought of Fate first stood before our young minds clearly, tragically. . . . The Temple of Athena gave all the clamours of my first vital shocks and wonders back to me, new and living.

Emotion of thinking, of knowing oneself part of such a strange universe. . . .

I seem to know, to assert—actually one can explain nothing. I only feel and transpose as best I can.

And at this point my feelings and my thoughts elude me as I try to grasp them and set them down. So I will note here, roughly:

There must be, among the many reasons for the power of this temple, and of Art, others that can be divined.

Watch the columns in their rhythmic flight. They are the fellows of that line of cypresses that marks the beat of Athens and that seemed only to be waiting for the signal to join the dance. They are linked with the decrescendos of clouds already tuned to the chromatic descent of the mountain's side, to the orderly scale of the sea's blue tones, to the decreasing perspective of waves. All these harmonies intensify the trance, even as vibrations of music make the glasses in the cupboard dance and certain strings in the piano and the water in the vase and the vase itself and our ear-drums and the hollow places of our chests and something in our spirits. . . . Resonance! The Parthenon, transmitter of waves sustained and modulated to the rhythm of Nature, which is our rhythm, sets the cadence.

In reality, all things obey the laws of Nature. Their touching, complete submission, however, is not always clearly seen. To make this harmony apparent is one of the means and one of the objects of great art. Every work of man's hands—art, industry, science—wherein the natural laws are well put forward, loudly sung, becomes real, becomes Nature's. Look how easily Nature accepts the Acropolis, and how they are both the richer for the steamer that is passing down there and that has fitted itself so happily to the waves that bear it. And the 'plane that uses, expresses and glorifies the laws of the air—Nature and the Acropolis rejoice in it together. The ship and the 'plane are in harmony with the natural forces, for without them they would not function. Our beings are in harmony with these forces also, since we live. But we are seldom aware of the fact. We have other worries.

Rhythm makes of us the eye, the ear, the heart, the spirit where the rhythm and the poetry of the world meet. It brings together what is within us and what is above us, links what is larger than ourselves with everything that we are: Actors in the great show and Spectators of the great show.

"What are you talking about? The world or the Parthenon?"

"Yes? What was I talking about?" I said politely (he is irritating at times). "I was getting worked up . . ."

"When I see a really lovely thing," said Mr. But, "I want to say what I feel about it. I would like to get hold of a keeper or stop some girl and tell them just how it affects me. But I don't dare. I know it wouldn't come out properly. Perhaps one is wrong after all not to be content just to enjoy . . ."

"I agree with you, my friend." (This was the first time I had called him friend. It was the first time that he had shown himself likeable.) "What I have been saying strikes me as both too vague and too precise. Oh yes! If one could only feel! It would be a great saving. But man must translate everything into words; it is not enough for him only to enjoy, or to let his heart speak silently. Just as we pinch ourselves to see if we are not dreaming, to make sure of our delight, so we want our lips

to tell our ears clearly why we are happy. For though sorrow is silent, great happiness is always unquiet. It never comes without a reminder of its rarity, its fragility. Happiness necessarily brings with it the thought of its end—to us who live ever in things that end and are forever ending. . . . In his moment of supreme delight a man asks anxiously: 'Why am I so happy?' He tries to answer, and his words are unintelligible, absurd. His body knows a reality that satisfies it utterly; in the dark of his mind are new intuitions; even his reason seems to understand. And he raves like the Pythoness! He fancies, perhaps, that he sees God, yet when he attempts to speak of his vision it becomes a dry thing, a vague, lifeless formula that awakens doubt in place of the burning certainty that is in him.

"Nothing that is felt has ever been completely rendered in words. There are truths and parts of truths that escape speech altogether. The musician, the writer, the philosopher, the mathematician break down before certain 'revelations' given by the arts of each sense individually to each individual sense. There are elements inherent in shape and colour just as there are elements inherent in words, in sounds, in scents, in mathematical symbols; they cannot be transposed.

"On the other hand, as I have said, certain realities may be grasped by all our senses; they are transformed for each of them. These are the realities that are common to all the arts, and it is for this reason that forms, mathematics, dances, philosophies are in the Parthenon.

"We have seen on the hill of Athens that, even as the highest sensations of the body nourish the mind, so do the great joys of the mind delight the body. The more deeply art stirs the senses the more truly it will reach the spirit. And inversely it is right that ideas should also convince the senses.

"So one must be wary of abstractions when they overdo their part, when they come out of their heaven and pretend to put their etherealities in place of the things they represent. It is possible, certainly, to make abstract 'schemas' to symbolise every concrete and spiritual 'form'. It is a pure and elegant

way of thinking. Everything can, in fact, be brought down to the pure idea of Structure. Yet I am sorry for the men for whom the idea of a thing replaces the thing itself. They are of the class of folk who are as content with the memory of their absent love as in the presence of the beloved. The lovers of the pretty, mummified Alexandrian dancers in the museums are as much to be pitied as the men who fall in love with hairdressers' dummies. A cube of meat extract does not take the place of a joint of beef, for all that its advertisers swear it is the quintessence of the herd. I am sorry for those who have not seen the Parthenon, who think they know it through figures and abstract formulae. The best plan, the best description, the best photograph of the beautiful temple is no more the temple than a tracing of the lines of force of an olive tree is the young olive tree I see there, its firm leaves rising about the knees of a caryatid. And a constructor's plan is but a frozen thing beside the flashing 'plane that was providing us a moment ago with an idea and that is now speeding across the square of blue that the cornices of the famous chapel cut out of the sky—the chapel where Athena reigned, beautiful, strong of body, her lucid ivory brow uplifted, teaching the Athenians that there are truths of the mind and truths of the body and that Truth is the sum of these two realities.

"So-called 'pure' ideas are to be mistrusted when they get between us and the real and between us and our grip of life.

"The body is not the mere tattered garment of the 'soul'; it is its foundation, its roots, its source. At the core of the odd biological phenomenon that we are, in the depths of this animal body into which the mind cannot look, over which it has no power, are ceaseless and numberless activities which cause certain extraordinary beings, like Ictinos, or certain apparently ordinary beings like the Douanier Rousseau, certain unlettered mystics or inventors, suddenly to bring forth the most astounding revelations. Their work may not strike them as strange or important, it may even appear quite natural to them, but to us it is altogether amazing. And indeed one may well be amazed by this most singular

genius, born of the perishable organs, that creates wonders for the mind that has no part in them. Strange, obscure life where the potentialities of our feelings and our thoughts survive and flourish. . . .

"Multitudinous, unceasing, incomprehensible labour of our cells. . . . Each ephemeral particle obeys the fantastic, co-ordinating genius which is in every animal and every plant that lives and that succeeds—it does not know how—in remaining whole and living in a world where everything tends to dissociate, to break up, to kill. When the reign of the mysterious ruler ceases, life resolves again into its raw materials—and thought is over! To remain a man, to survive—what a miracle! 'A sane mind needs a sound body' is a commonplace. Yet is it? How many religions have taught, still teach the opposite.

"Be men. Forget that soon, a little less soon, you will perish. Forget that life for the most part cares nothing for you. Beyond you, humanity goes on. Serve it. In this way you will find usefulness and immortality.

"Ictinos built the platform. Six times the lines of the steps stress the lines of the sea. One of them prolongs the horizon so that the steps are linked with the sky, which, again, is linked to the waters and to the hills: they seem to grow out of a sea wave. Then, on this ordered space, he raised his splendid pillars. Twenty-four stretch out, offering at a single glance a slanting view of their hundred-and-ninety-two flutings. Verticals at the dominant, horizontals at the bass—a fundamental theme (here the curve is no more than a restrained vibrato) that speaks directly to the two fundamental axes of our sense of form, the two opposing master impulses of direction. The movements compel us to follow them. They create in us attitudes of mind and feeling by means of the curious inner mimesis that is part of our natures and that is one of the chief instruments by which art fashions us, body and soul, to its images.¹ In the building of the Parthenon the same magic was used, that we might forcibly be moulded to its perfections and so compelled to perfect ourselves. Irresistibly it leads us.

¹ *Art*, p. 246. The power of forms.

The ineluctable tracks of the grooved columns carry our gaze, our hearts, our spirits, all our indivisible being upward. Whether we like it or not—hup! But abruptly the powerful horizontal entablature checks the ascent. Stop! Our business is to be raised up, but not to vanish altogether into a land of dreams, not to desert our human duties. ‘Grow fine, grow pure,’ said the Parthenon to the Athenians. ‘That is my wish. But stay where you are.’ The pediment takes you in its mighty, angular grasp and thrusts you down. ‘Athens wants you.’

“Thus were the shapes of the Parthenon contrived, to the end that its citizens should be exalted, yet never allowed to escape from the real, from the City of Athens.

“The master shapes forbade day-dreams that soften the fibre, sap the energies. This was done for the good of the Athenians, most superstitious of men. Certain Gothic cathedrals foster the mind’s escape and may, on this account, be dangerous. Weak souls are drawn into them; they sink into the shadows of a vague, shapeless mysticism and are lost to themselves and to the world.

“No doubt there are churches, like the Cathedral of Paris, that are robust and vigorous, the visible incarnation, seemingly, of a faith of the true, rational French sort, wherein, apart from the chief tenets, all is, if not Reason herself, at least well reasoned out (sometimes almost too well). But there are churches whose romanticism is unhealthy. Pantheism is full of devils, you say. I ask you: which of the two breeds the worst devils—that nave with its endless columns rising, rising into the uneasy dark, into a Walpurgis night of prowling demons and witches, or that Greek temple, compact of light and clean shadow where not one troubled thought can lurk?

“Yes, light must have its complement of shade. But the Greek light is mysterious with the mysteries it reveals, the Gothic shadow with the mysteries it hides.

“The rationalism of the best Greek minds was not the white-livered, self-satisfied rationalism that characterises many of their followers in scientific circles to-day. No men have been more curious than the Greeks. Truly they were haunted by the

mysteries of First Causes: great work comes only from those who ask the great questions. They were aware of their own ignorance, but they did not consider ignorance to be a reason, an excuse, for drivelling, witless and faint-hearted, at the feet of the gods.

“The great Hellenes—I am speaking, of course, only of them—did not feel small and unimportant. If the world is seen as a vast, harmoniously ordered machine, each cog, however small, must contribute to the smooth working of the whole. Man’s insignificant stature no longer matters. The tiniest creature is no less necessary than the largest, for all that astronomers tell us a ray of light takes milliards of years to encircle our little universe. Before Spinoza, the Greeks believed that man is a part of the whole. But an indispensable part! You can read this noble philosophy in their art, where—from the smallest organ cannot be removed without disabling the entire structure. According to Francke, we are composed of twenty-six milliards of cells; if one of them begins to blunder, that is cancer.

“Yet there are Christians who, wishing to please their God, despise the ‘wretched little realities of this world’. As though they had the right to despise the minutest particle of their Lord’s work! The best among the Greeks were too deeply convinced in their minds and in their feelings of their necessary place in Creation not to do their jobs correctly as human particles, appointed by the great elementary forces to the human task. They gave divine names to these great forces; that was but a way of giving names to the great realities. Matter is the necessary basis of every useful thing, however abstract it may be, however apparently disinterested, religious. The first divinity the Greeks adored was Gaia, the Earth. It is not possible to love and serve one’s neighbour, obeying Christ, if one is egotistically detached from this world. A true Christian and a good socialist are, as a matter of fact, strangely alike, for both, every form of suicide, even the most masked, is a cowardly act, a betrayal of mankind.

“Too many so-called Christians ‘piously’ cultivate their impotence. They take great pride in it; they offer it to God.

A grand gift! The Greeks offered their gods the homage of their strength; there are still at Delos gigantic marble phalluses raised towards the bright sun. I do not expect our pious voluntary eunuchs to go as far as that. All I ask is that they should love and respect life. Zeus punished the Greeks by casting them into 'black death'. Too many priests say that God of the Christians rewards His people by calling them to Himself. Towards the end of his life the painter L . . . became very devout. He died. His doctor, an old family friend, went a couple of days later to condole with the widow. He was greeted with cries of joy: 'At last! He is in Paradise! I am so happy, so happy. . . .'

"If you go to the Acropolis, remember this true story. I promise you the liveliest revolt against so much impiety. Exaggerations of this kind sicken me just about as much as the pantheistic custom, precisely opposite in nature, whereby a Malayan widow partakes sacramentally of death and her husband in the rotting juices of his body.

"A true Christian condemns such aberrations. Christ's will was to bring more justice, more active goodness into the world, so that men might live more happily. But sorcerers have made it their habit to rule men with the boggy of death. Every thinking man, Christian or non-Christian, true-believer or otherwise, must agree with the Provençal Vauvenargues:

"There can be no falser measure of life than death."

"And: '*To do great things one must live as though one would never die.*'"

"So now you're a Christian?" said Mr. But.

"Wasn't I before? Aren't we all Christians more or less? Whether we're believers or not, Jew or Christian? I don't see that it's at all necessary, when you speak of the Greek contribution to civilisation and the Christian contribution, to run down the one for the sake of glorifying the other. It's a stupid, rather mean thing to do. To deny either of them is to deny one half of ourselves. The Greeks gave us the love of

life, of health, they gave us philosophy—all of which makes for activity and so for usefulness, for service to others, following Christ's wish. Must one necessarily abuse Christ, who exalted Brotherhood, in order to show sympathy with the men of Moscow, who also exalt it? Without the Greeks, Christianity might have dropped back into that hair-splitting, soul-withering Judaism that Jesus attacked—and that is still withering the Warsaw rabbis. . . .

“*Be men, serve others,*” say Athena, Jesus and Lenin.”

“Amen,” said Mr. But.

“Have you noticed? They’re selling postcards on the steps of the Propylaea? And Kodak films and ‘evzone’ dolls, and Turkish bazaar stuff—especially those little gilded cast-iron camels that have turquoise beads dangling from their necks. And Greek sponges at prices that genuinely defy competition! It’s rather shocking.”

“You’re right. It is a bit unpleasant. But the old Greek who is selling water there on the Acropolis—he doesn’t shock you, does he? That is because his tenpenny earthenware jug with its stubborn neck and proud belly, is well fitted to the entrance of the world’s loveliest building. Art has made that lump of mud beautiful. That is how high materialism should be understood—as an ennobling of substance. . . .”

“Eh?” said he.

“We’ll talk about that another time. This will be enough for to-day. . . . Contrary to the usual twaddle, past and present, the beautiful is not necessarily the immediately useful. A flower is not as ‘useful’ as a spider that eats flies. . . . Yet we kill spiders and make bouquets out of flowers. A pretty woman is not more useful than an ugly one. If man let himself be conquered by the strictly useful, the merely useful and comfortable, we should soon be beasts again. All honour, therefore, to the beautiful things whose apparent utility is nil and whose destiny is no more than to give us pleasure! Is that nothing? Art, even in its most ‘gratuitous’ forms, is supremely necessary. First, quite simply, because it

answers a primary need, plainly manifest since the beginnings of humanity. Secondly, because its effects are always useful. They help us to live, and their beauty stirs us to better actions. The aim of art is to satisfy, by way of the highest of our senses, our highest aspirations. Beware! This supreme necessity often assumes the mask of uselessness. Some of the most beautiful Greek vases had no bottom."

"Maybe . . . But aren't you rather inclined to take every Greek for a Pericles? The people of Athens were untruthful, greedy. . . . And they ate a lot of garlic."

"What about it? They were men who ate a lot of garlic. Why shouldn't they if it gave them pleasure? I know some very nice people who eat a lot of garlic. I like it very much myself, and if it weren't for my pupils . . . And I am perfectly well aware that the Greeks were not all Periclese. Have I come to Greece to compare them with the mediocre men of our time, or the worst men? I abominate the kind of decadence, of sadism, the cheap journalism, the theatrical propaganda that makes people in Paris, New York, London, Moscow, specialise in photographs of slums and beggars. They swear that news that does not stress the worst of things is false! They call that being 'true to life'. It is not true to life since there is good in life also. If you take only the worst in history—what a nasty story! Or the worst of a saint—what a sinner! Or the worst of an honest man—what a scoundrel! Come on now! Let's see things at their best. Why accumulate horrors? Other people will do the scavenging. I don't say it isn't often useful . . . Here: Lines of Force only!"

I really must introduce Mr. But. He is a nice fellow. You know him a little already. I met him on the boat. While Sergius is actually his Christian name, But is not his surname. I have called him that so as not to give him away. After all he is a friend. Nearly all his sentences begin with "But", or "Maybe, but . . ." Also, when I was at St. Quentin School, there was a master whose name was May and who used to repeat, over and over again, that he had never known such a fool of

a boy as I was. Sometimes, when I am talking about the past, I will say more about this other Mr. Maybe But. He did me a great service by inspiring in me the naïve determination to astonish him one day with my works. I wonder if he is still alive? I have done nothing astonishing.

Sergius follows no profession; he lives comfortably on his income, and so is able to be in many ways a dilettante. Unfortunately he has one fault: he believes that one should never be taken in, even by a generous thought. A generous thought strikes him at once as dangerous; he is very cautious. But he's not a fool; he dresses up his caution as an elegant scepticism. This attitude is his safety-cage. He was never in great danger! He thinks it extremely scientific and also extremely smart never to get excited over anything. His caution is mostly shyness. He avoids too pretty women and lives with his housemaid, a plain little person who leads him by the nose. He is better than he seems, much less good than he would be if he let himself go. That is one of the drawbacks of the absurd upbringing that is commonly known as practical and that takes pains to produce men at once timid and foxy.

Sergius But prides himself on being always in the "happy mean". I am after precision too, but a different precision. I am going to try to get him out of all this. He goes through life with the exquisite assurance of the official who said, when the Education Committee was choosing books for the schools:

"Sir! The words 'God' and 'religion' should be effaced from all books, now that we know everything."

As though to tease him, Fate often plays little pranks on the self-confident Mr. But. The other day at Smyrna, he was shaken up by an accident that happened to his bed. The spring mattress was badly wedged into place. A small earthquake gave it a jerk. It jumped, turned over and buried our But, crushing his nose flat. He still wears a piece of sticking plaster that makes his voice like a duck's. Sergius is very handy for me. His love of contradiction helps me to correct my mistakes. Sometimes he puts up an idea himself. I catch it. Or take a shot at it. Secretly he thinks this is very good

sport. I could readily believe that his contradictions and a good measure of his scepticism are no more than the dodges of an investigating magistrate. He wants to "investigate", but carefully, without taking any risks. He is a great amateur of cruising. Half seriously, half in his little smarty mood, he said to me:

"Next year I'll stand myself Norway. The fjords and the ice-floes and the Midnight Sun and all that. Or else the Illyrian coast. Or New York. Or Senegal. What I like best about a cruise, you know, is the ship. Nice and comfortable. Good food. Good drink. You pick up useful people. Nice people. You see a lot of pretty women. Everything's done for you. You have only to lie back and enjoy yourself. And they show you famous things, so that you learn a bit and are amused into the bargain."

This year he is "doing" the Mediterranean. Like every one else he had heard of the Parthenon. He thought it would be like the Madeleine in Paris "only older, of course, and a good deal better".

And yet to-day I can see him positively gaping. He has stuck his eternal guide-book into his pocket. He really looks as if he had taken a knock. Seeing me come up he smiles, glad of the chance of unbosoming himself. Great beauty makes one communicative, sensitive, sometimes even intelligent. . . .

"It's a masterpiece! Yet it's quite different from what I had been led to expect. I don't understand! If the Parthenon is a masterpiece, isn't the Madeleine, which is like it, or so the art-masters said, a masterpiece too? If one can't even trust the professors . . . This temple—really—what is it?"

"It is a masterpiece. There are very few such in the world. The masterpiece is the triumphant victory of a prolonged desire. The 'plane satisfied man's persistent desire to fly. When we were children we may not have thought much about it. We were told that our passion was futile. But in sleep we often realised Icarus's great desire, the myth of this particular need. Our 'planes are still very primitive. Christ's socialism

is a fossil beside that of our democracies. And they are very far from being masterpieces! The Parthenon is a masterpiece, that is to say a work that utterly fulfils the need that gave it birth. Think how many centuries were required to satisfy this need completely! Remember the stammering experiments as far back as Chaldea and Egypt; others in Mycæan Greece in the 20th century before Christ; others again at Olympia about the start of the 7th century; others in Italy and Sicily and on the Acropolis with the old Hekatompedon. . . . And the three attempts at a Parthenon, before the sublime end came. How touching those hesitating archaic essays are, those early images of a desire that craved to know itself that it may be fulfilled! And how much 'truer' those attempts are than the decadent reflections that come after the great work, the copies, the reproductions, the thinned-out, tasteless brews of truth! The fore-runners of the Types are going towards excellence. Just as the Phenadocus of the Eocene period is in the pedigree of the horse that has just won the Derby——"

"And just as," said Mr. But, "the winner of the Derby will be in the pedigree of a considerable number of hacks. . . ."

"Bravo! In Art as in palaeontology, 'forms' evolve slowly towards their apogee and then decline. The ferns and horse-tails of our forests were once great forests themselves. Now they give shade to rabbits and to green-fly. The Parthenon has declined into Roman temples, Madeleines, Stock Exchanges . . . even into clocks and watch-charms. The masterpiece, since it is a perfection, is also an end. There are very few termini of this sort. Humanity has not been travelling very long. Our stock of masterpieces is indeed poor. . . ."

"The masterpiece, anyway, can always be recognised by the fact that it awakens no desire beyond the desire to enjoy it again. Contrariwise, if imperfect works of art—the immense majority!—half satisfy us, it is, no doubt, that they awaken obscure desires, drowsing in us, and do no more than half appease them. No doubt ugliness is painful because it awakens the thought of a lack of beauty. . . ."

"How *right* it is, that temple!"

"Quite true. But right in what way?"

"It's proportions are perfectly balanced. They fit one another."

"That is a formula often used to describe the action of a work of art that gives good results. I hope for your sake that the words are only an indirect way of saying that the proportions of the building are fitted to you. To something that is in you. Now. Can you tell me what makes their balance, their fitness possible? Who is judging them? What has happened? Here's an odd thing. . . .

"I can see quite plainly, Mr. But, that this temple completely satisfies you. And yet, the day before yesterday, you did not know you had any need of it. And yet you must have needed it badly since now you are a different man, a changed and happier man!

"What about the strange craving you discover in yourself when you fall suddenly and violently in love? Don't you find that odd? You had never seen the woman. You see her and instantly you want her. Your happiness depends on it, you will die if . . .

"These lightning passions, these human electric storms—don't they presuppose conditions similar to those of real lightning, real electric storms? A void and a complementary potential, the one ready to fill the other?"

"There was therefore in you a passion that you knew nothing of, for some object that you knew nothing of—two halves that, without knowledge of each other, nevertheless sought each other, like the sister-souls in the Zohar, or the wandering spermatozoid seeking the expectant ovum.

"I have an idea that man, ever since he has been man¹ has had certain needs—his basic desires. Some of them have, in course of time, been fulfilled. Others are still waiting for the act, the idea, the discovery, the work that will fulfil them.

"This ruin is really very beautiful. One must admit, nevertheless, that one is sorry not to see it as it once was, intact.

¹ *Art*, pp. 195-216. The man of All Time and the man of To-day.

Must it be supposed that we compare it with a perfect image that is in us?"

"We have merely," said Mr. But, "imagined what the temple was like when it was new."

"If you like. But let's go back to the days when Ictinos was about to build. The image of the Parthenon must have existed, not only in his mind but in the minds of all those who were to see and admire it. For I ask you—can you conceive of a satisfaction without a pre-existing need? And a perfect content must necessarily 'conform' to the need."

"The sight of a beautiful thing wakens the wish to see it again. You said so yourself."

"But would it instantly have struck us as beautiful if we had not been disposed to find it so? That is to say if there had not been in us an image of it—negative, unknown to us, yet complete?"

"Perhaps, in a broad view, one might picture every unsatisfied need as a sort of negative awaiting its positive, the positive being the material or intellectual structures whose 'form' corresponds to the 'form' of the need? The needs would be latent, passive in the mass of men; they would be potential acts, potential revelations in inventors, thinkers, artists, sociologists, statesmen, economists—in fact in the Artist-discoverers, that is to say the men capable of bringing into the world the idea, the system, the method, the work of art, the machine that they and the men of their time clearly or dimly desire.

"By this way of thinking, happiness would depend upon the number of 'moulds' that had found their 'casts'. Isn't it true that happiness of the intellect depends on the amount of knowledge accumulated—that is, on the number of questions satisfactorily answered? What is knowledge but the store-house of secrets that have been disclosed and problems that have been solved?"

"I know quite well, my friend, that I have not answered your questions. I have only transformed them into other questions. And yet I have the feeling at this moment that,

thus transformed, they are a little better adapted to the movements of the Unconscious, that hidden ruler of our beings. . . .”

“Are you dreaming?” said Mr. But.

As a matter of fact, I was. A real dream. I thought I lay in a green forest. I was happy as a god, for I knew everything. Revelations, already forgotten, came to me in the form of scents. . . .

Why this sudden flight? Was it that the green smell of the Museion groves had roused dream-memories of my youth and the woods of Fayet that smelt so pleasantly of chlorophyl. . . .

The truth that is waiting for us but that we do not yet know—does it not sometimes send forth emanations, just as an unknown, hidden substance may tell us of its presence without our guessing what or where it is? When we reflect deeply on the great questions, a singular, sad perfume seems to float about us, darker and more intoxicating than all unknown scents. . . . Do we not breathe an air as of lost paradises when we ponder the things of which we are most ignorant?

Imagine for a moment that every question is the signal of an answer known in the past but forgotten, sunk in the obscurities of our beings and seeking to return to consciousness.

Can it be that men are so made that every question is the sign of a truth presently to be born? If that were so, every question that is asked would be asked only of answers already virtually in existence within ourselves. The secret answers would, as it were, be the questioners. . . .

And so there would be no questions that would refuse ultimately to give satisfaction? Not even those concerning our own funny existence? Why not . . .? “What do you say, Mr. But, that’s better than that?” He, in his turn, was dreaming.

“Nothing. I’m listening. . . .”

“However that may be—although we know more than our

old Cave forefathers knew, what do we know of their knowledge? When the scientist tries to discover how 'things happened in the past', in order to see what has become of them in the present, he looks for ancient, forgotten facts. It seems I'm restoring fossils, but fossils have taught us a good deal already. Men, most undoubtedly, saw or lived through events of a kind that no longer occur to-day and that are nevertheless responsible for a part of to-day. To know of them would shed light not only on the past but on the present. One last day a man forgot them, and they have been unknown ever since. Have forgotten wisdoms left their negative imprint upon us, as the fossil creatures left the trace of their feet in the clay? Pour a little plaster into the hollow petrified space and you have the model of an unknown animal's foot. The negative imprint has been made positive. But how shall ours be known?

"A man is made, we said, of thousands of milliards of cells. Some people even think that the human body was formed of a sort of communistic confederation of once isolated units. Each of the specialised groups still work independently of consciousness. Haven't these groups kept something perhaps of the traditions of the far-off days of pre-human creation from which they come? Our bold experimenters have tried to get into touch, by signals, with the hypothetical inhabitants of Mars. The real inhabitants of our bodies have been left unquestioned, forgotten. . . ."

"It would be a good thing if they had a memory and could talk to us!"

"We know how to make stars 'talk' in the spectroscope by questioning the rays that left them thousands of years ago. And you are aware, Sergius, that the essential hereditary 'factors' of our bodies proceed, generation by generation, from the reproductive cells, which have proceeded from the first men. There are surely imprints on these immortal cells, 'memories' of some sort? Who will find a way of communicating with our eternally young fossils? How can we establish a communication between our consciousness and our forgotten 'memories'? But we always want the unknown to

speaking our language! Some of our intuitions are quite possibly the herd-cry of our immortal units. . . .

"In spite of so many centuries' efforts, man has found out exactly nothing of what man is. Perhaps our calls go to the wrong number? In always questioning consciousness we are probably aiming too high. Maybe one day some new detector will enable us to listen-in to the 'factors' in spermatozoa and ova telling us their stories of the original human adventure.

"One has the impression sometimes that unsuspected answers, words that have never yet been heard, are there, just there on the brink of consciousness. . . . Are they our hidden beings giving us their hidden knowledge, and are we allowing it to go to waste as the undiscovered waves went to waste in the past?"

"The history of the world," said Mr. But, "would be contained in a brain so small that it could not be seen or imagined!"

"My good man, that means nothing. It has been declared and most rashly believed that all thought and all consciousness requires a brain; moreover that the creatures that possess memory are those whose brains are visible to the eye. Quite simple, you see! The animaculae in human seed were not discovered till the end of the 17th century. No doubt Hartsoeker, the physician who first beheld them, went a bit far in saying that they were microscopic children, complete with heads, limbs and all the rest of it. Yet to a certain extent he was less wrong than those of his contemporaries who refused to see in the creatures and their extreme liveliness anything more than the agents whose passionate agitation was intended to excite the pleasure necessary to love.

"Nowadays it has been decided that spermatozoa have no brains, hence no consciousness. It's quite possible. Yet they behave, act, go hell for leather after their loves, just precisely, my dear But, as though they had your large and powerful brain. And if you snip a piece off their tails they grow it again! Which does not prevent you from feeling you are the King of Creation—together, I understand, with the eagle, the lion, the dog, and the horse. To think that one is

the sole possessor of the world's thoughts and memories is only a way of thinking. . . . We are no more than curious epiphenomena, temporary tumours of the marvellous particles that put us into the world. Bow low before these Everlasting Vestals of life—these, as you might say, professional fornicators—these Life-Factors the Chromosomes, our ancestors and our remotest children! Bow low before the infinitely small King of Life. . . .”

Return. Good-bye, Athens—that should not be pronounced *Athina*, or *Anthinea*, but still more childishly *Athèna* . . .

Land. Marseilles. By the quay-side, in the sunshine, a child is relieving itself noisily on the rails of our train. It bursts with laughter at its own outbursts. Its mother cries: “You son of a bitch! You’ll get run over!”

Lyrical realism in the Greek manner, which was also the manner of Rabelais and of Shakespeare. A poetry that can breathe well below an altitude of 4,180 metres. As you may see:

“Beware of Draughts!
Hold tight to your tickets!”

And there is the admirable, bilingual slogan of the posters on the Provence roads, advertising the Nile—EGYPT FOR ROMANCE. EGYPTE POUR ROMAN—exasperating in each of us the hope of his most cherished dream—in the elderly virgin: a raping bedouin; in me: the discovery of the first chapter of humanity’s romance.

I like Paris, but for the first time in my life I am going back to it, after a journey, with real regret. And yet the cruise has given me a sharp appetite for action. Mind you, not any action! The present time is formidably rich in resources. Nevertheless, the greater part of mankind is still compelled to wonder, every night, like the savages of the poorest lands, like the cave-men of old times and no doubt vastly more anxiously, how it will find food to-morrow. Is this worthy of the “Mediterranean civilisation” we are so proud of and wish so fondly to perpetuate?

BOOK II

1931-33

STORY OF A PERIOD, A MAN, A PICTURE

To

MY WIFE

MARTHE-THÉRÈSE

for her untiring courage

February 5. I can confess it to myself now, I started for Greece in a very depressed mood. Two betrayals, money troubles, a fatigue that had been gathering in me for years past, and especially France's eternal Crisis that makes life seem grey, work fruitless. . . . Material things have more effect on the head and the heart than one cares to acknowledge.

I came back keen, full of energy. I have decided to-day to make a double experiment, to carry out two things side by side, a book and a picture, this chapter in my diary and the picture that is trying to be born. I shall jot down here, pell mell, day by day, the "life" of the picture and this year's life.

An X-ray, slow-motion film has been taken of an egg, registering the changes that end in the hatching of a chicken. I would like to film a work from its conception to the final signature. To show it being engendered, shaping, growing, encountering crises, surmounting them, improving—coming to fullness at last, or perishing. . . . The screen would show the author living: everything that moved him, disturbed him, made him less or made him more, everything that opposed his purpose or served it. The loudspeaker would let you hear the author thinking and considering, looking for his bases, fighting hostile ideas and compelling them to yield, or yielding to them. Since I cannot film it I will, as it were, photograph the stages of my picture and what I see, think, suffer, attempt.

You the spectator, look at the finished work. It seems quite natural to you; you have no notion whatsoever of what it might have been. After a moment even the author can no longer recall the determining factors, the odd chances that came to him, productive or damaging; the causes of his success

or of his failure. The notes that I am taking will have the incoherence that the events of life invariably impose on us. Yet they will have a secret coherence. An author's personality is the finest of hair sieves; automatically, inevitably, what has gone through it is in the image of his nature.

A need possesses me. It is urgent, intense, hot and exciting, happy therefore, yet oppressive, filling me with anguish. It is in every part of my body, it enraptures my mind. This extreme agitation is a warning that the artist in me is undergoing a crisis. And the crisis is an unerring sign that I have changed; the pictures I have painted in the past no longer satisfy me; the medicine has lost its potency. Without our knowledge, slowly, subtly, desires grow in us and of a sudden cry out for satisfaction. The new warmth means, also, that the necessary remedy is at hand. In the same way a fever bears witness to the battle of the united and the disunited forces of the body and is the chemical change that creates the disease's antidote. If to be with child were an illness I should imagine myself ill. I can only hope it is not a "phantom pregnancy" or a miscarriage!

Can I make out anything of the picture yet? I will try.

It is the colour that gives the first cry. I can feel in my stomach the deep humming, the slow, double-bass pulsations that well up from the reds, even in thought. Fire. Great moving skies; silent "values" like the transparent veils that comets draw across the night's blue. A vigorous conflict of shadows and daylight. The morning's pale, pearly blues harmonising earth and air. . . . Great spaces of air and water. Since my return from the desert I invoke the memory of its serenity as a corrective to the fussiness of modern towns. Men will live in this place of light. Not as demi-gods, centres of the world, but as elements of the universe. Figures larger than the human figures will personify air, sun, night.

The scenario, probably, will show the course of life in its submission to Nature. A number of elementary lives, obeying at the same moment the same great forces symbolised by the eternal analogies: morning-youth, midday-virility, evening-

age, etc. (I *know* that after this picture I shall want another with a Man-hero, bringer of the changes that will civilise himself and give order to the world.)

The actors of my Company have, of themselves, taken their places in my mind, ready to perform their respective parts. What I call my Company are the figures that I have in the past years shaped in forms and colours to express definite thoughts or feelings: love, tenderness, sleep, waking, pleasure, jealousy, pantheism, grace, brute force, health, weakness, strength, passion, melancholy, youth, age, etc. They are specialists; their business is to evoke their corresponding thought or feeling. Most of them will surely be wanted in my new symphony. They are my themes, my "types".

If I were merely content to "compose" them, I should be doing stage-work. So, in order that each element should participate in the whole and yet remain subject to it, I shall keep sternly to the following rule: "The greatest number of figures shall have outlines in common with their neighbours." It is a rule I made for myself in my so-called Purist days. Difficulty created for its own sake is not an aim in art; it is a means of discovering purity and of achieving homogeneity.

I must go now to scribble a first sketch.

February 6. Yesterday I sowed the first seed. There it is in all its poverty, that is so rich to me. In it are my reasons for living, perhaps for years to come. Christened: *LIFE*.

I shudder at the thought of the unending quests, the mistakes that must be rectified, the illusions that will have to be brought down, the long, long labour before the day comes when the picture will be mine, when I shall have it there, in front of me, submitting me to itself. Revealing me to myself. And revealing to other men what I have in common with them, my humanity. By then, much time will have passed; I shall have changed. Yet the picture must satisfy the *man I shall have become*. That is the most dangerous point in all art that is not content with the impromptu.

The fear of it, you may say, is a condemnation of any work that takes time, since the man who achieves has ceased to be

the man who conceived. We are never, especially in these days of rapid change, the contemporaries of our finished works. A good-quality artist is seldom pleased with what he has just done. Yet appearances are against me here. A man still feels closest to his most recent work; the pains of childbirth make his last-born dear to him. In reality the child, conceived out of a passion to create a being like oneself, remains too young for its father until the day when both are old men and so can understand each other. The son has at last caught up with the parent for whom time is standing still. Sketches satisfy their makers, being of the same age. Happy sketchers!

Sketches (that people nowadays have the cheek to call pictures) can be very seductive. They can have charm and a measure of the mystery that foetuses have and that many finished pictures lack. And of course a good sketch is worth more than a bad picture, just as any young thing that is developing stirs a deeper feeling than a dud adult. As a Swiss proverb says: "There is no bean so small it can't make a little music."

But I have no choice. While I occasionally like other people's sketches, I detest my own. They are no more than mnemotechnics, they are not even rough drafts. I like pictures where every part has been deeply thought out. A sketch can never express all that the artist would have said if he had developed his idea thoroughly. It is the spring's first bubbling; mud is still mixed with it; implicit beauties are not made clear; the author often does not see all its opportunities. A sketch—snapshot of a moment, the short-hand story of a passing fancy—can give ease as vomiting gives ease. But can it be of any use to others?

To try for perfection and permanence requires time, deliberation. Only a slow, careful criticism will rid one of what is merely tentative. Passion's first scrawls must be seen in the successive lights of our own changes and so straightened out. The process of refining is a series of creative acts. Neither fire-works nor sonnets, though they last but a moment, can



“LIFE” THE FIRST IDEA

be let off without much patient, preliminary labour. Can one bring out a work of art as one breaks wind?

As a rule I destroy my sketches as soon as I have brought the picture to the best end I can. This time I will keep them as a check on the experiment I am making.

From my window I frequently see painters going towards the Parc Montsouris, artists of every size and colour, their canvases under their right arms, their paint-boxes slung over their shoulders, their easels aloft, like fishing-rods. Their zinc brush-cleaners dangle from straps; they are exactly the same shape as the boxes in which anglers keep their gentles. Two or three hours later, after a pleasant time by the lake's side, they come back, the pictures they have caught held at arm's length, finished, signed. Their hats are happily cocked, happy at having done their painter's duty. Their return is the return of the hearty angler, each man with his fish. It makes me think of what was said by Delacroix (in whose steps most of these sketching fellows fondly imagine they are walking):

“ . . . What, improvise? That is to say rough out and finish at the same time, please imagination and please thought at the same stroke, in the same breath? For a mortal to do that would be like putting the language of the gods to everyday use. Do people realise the infinite resource that talent employs to hide its efforts? Who can say what this or that admirable passage cost? . . . At most what may be called improvisation in a painter is the heat of work done swiftly without corrections or retouching. Yet if there had been no preliminary roughing-out—and a roughing-out of the most able and well-calculated sort, devised in view of the final achievement—such a feat would be impossible, even to an artist like Tintoretto who is said to have been the swiftest of painters, or to a Rubens himself. In Rubens, particularly, the last supreme touches, the artist's final expression of his thought, are not, as their strength and firmness might lead one to suppose, the work that stirred the prince of painters' creative faculty to the uttermost. It

is his conception of the whole, at the outset, in the first features of his picture, it is in the disposal of the parts, that his highest gifts were exercised. That is where he really worked."

I know that to try to go beyond oneself is a dangerous proposition. You may smile, you the professional scampers—boys of the "You see that it's really quite easy" brigade. We'll see *it* in a year or two.

Well. I've made my sketch. Was I in too much of a hurry?

Directly the tool introduces matters, matter binds us. The moment when the first shapes and colours are set down is a grave moment. Actual forms, direct realities, they break the fragile web spun by imagination. From that first momentous hour the die is cast. One shape generates its neighbour and thus, step by step, all the shapes. One colour excludes most of the others yet insists upon those of its own group. So the work is self-determined practically from the outset. If it is to come to anything, each element predetermines the others. As long as his thought alone is active, the artist is free. As soon as matter has been mobilised matter submits him to its will. It is nearly always stronger than his mind. He must follow it; he is no more than its "medium". Writers know well how words can call up thoughts. If you run short of ideas, open a dictionary haphazard, pick out the first word you see, write it in the middle of your page; in an hour your article will have crystallised about this nucleus. Many artists start off in the same way from some chance colour that seemed pleasing on the palette. The resulting picture is but a family gathering of the Lefrancis, come together at Papa Lefranc's call. But it is a shameful procedure.

The picture moves in me. All loves gain strength from resistance. I will resist my own idea. I will try, even, to get away from it, so as to keep the seed from the premature chills of thought. If it is strong and healthy and really mine, an authentic emanation, it will come back of itself, insistent, haunting, more developed, hence more easily grasped. One's

job is to ensnare the idea; but it must not be so tiny it goes through the meshes, or so fragile that it is torn and spoiled thereby. To return to the plant image: once your seed is sown, don't fiddle with it every morning. Nurse it. Do as the earth does; leave it to the secret forces that are in you.

My sketches are only warm coals that I keep under the ash to light my fire next day. I draw them "badly" on purpose, so as to prevent some unhappy "happy chance" from proliferating. A shape that is partially good, a successful piece of brushwork, a colour that is of itself lovely—one is tempted to keep them, and if one yields to the temptation the main thought is falsified. We were going to Athens and here we are in Berne! The nose of the Swiss engine-driver looked so attractive. . . .

Summary of the process that immediately follows the first premonitions:

- (1) Aware of a need and of its possible satisfaction.
- (2) I should like my work to be useful also to other people.
- (3) First: a sensation of colour.
- (4) A predominating feeling: the Universe.
- (5) Appearance of the pre-existing "types"; figures expressing the chief ideas and feelings, forming a skeleton.
- (6) Delight in work. Fear of hard and prolonged work. What if it did not come off? Funk.

February 7. Ours are the "days of the motor, the 'plane, the wireless". Also of the gramophone. Machines would benefit the people if their owners used them to enforce the production of good quality stuff only. But the industrialist caste turns the machines to the sole base use of making itself rich by pandering to the lowest sort of appetite. It publishes "Atchi-Atchoum" the "hesitation sneezing waltz", performed by Constantin-le-Rieur (who doesn't laugh at all well). The thing sells like hot cakes. This shows that the bourgeoisie no longer deserves to govern; it no longer directs but obeys the class it professes to be directing.

February 8. Can a personal diary be sincere?

It has been said that no writer can be sincere. He is always
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watching himself, listening to himself, choosing, correcting, etc. . . . and this necessarily implies insincerity.

But wait a minute. Not only the author of a book but all men and possibly many animals, spend their lives exercising choice. To obey a natural function is surely the height of sincerity? To choose a path through the bush does not suggest duplicity? And when it comes to finding ourselves the only way of not beating about the bush is, precisely, to choose! In fact to choose is our only means of being sincere. We correct what we write because our first drafts are not really ourselves. They are ourselves scattered and stammering.

It is possible that when I am old this diary of mine will seem interesting. Old photographs that once appeared commonplace, become ever more strange with the passing of time. They show us, mysteriously living, what was alive and is now dead. Singular power of the past and of memories, and so of tales, of history. . . . Already by nightfall one enjoys reading of the familiar events of the day. There was a lot of rain, the wind blew furiously, it was quite dark at noon, the street-lamps were lit—by seven o'clock Paris reads over again the description of the commonplace meteor. So I will gather my raw material as it comes. Later it will be put through the sieve that time and living will have given me¹

February 9. Fever. I am in the full heat of composing *LIFE*. What is going on in me?

Many people see creation as an automatism. It is usual to consider the conscious and the unconscious as two distinct if not hostile worlds, connected only on their "fringes". I realise now, as I paint, that, in art, this conception gives an entirely wrong view of the phenomenon. At all events in my case. It suggests that we have, as it were, two mental valves, one opening on the things of thought, the other upon those of intuition. In this view, if one of the valves is to remain open, the other must be closed.

I can see clearly that we can keep both valves open at the same time, that we can enjoy both states simultaneously and

¹ Hence Part III of this book.

are constantly in contact with both functions. As I set down what is in my imagination I am lucid, yet the dream continues to function at white heat; which is very different from making use, in cold blood, of a memory of something already dead. This dual state is the real creative activity, a sustained, observable trance, the *lucid trance*. You see at one and the same moment your dream and its painted representation, just as you see in the glass of a child's copying machine both the reflection of the drawing copied and the copy.

February 10. An architect came. He bored me. It seems that art has no longer any place in our present "age of reason". Making a pretence of preferring illusion to truth, I told him the following story. (As a matter of fact I have no preference; I love both equally. But I wanted to annoy him.)

Five or six years ago the fishermen of Pakoa in the Azores saw mermaids in the night. Bernadis the hotel-keeper swore to it. News of the wonder spread far and wide. It even reached America. Amateurs of living mythology gathered thickly round. Bernadis put up a strong search-light, and one evening, in its beams, surprised the daughters of the deep at their gambols. After that, finding no doubt that the electric rays were more flattering to their beauty than those of mild Selene, the sirens returned punctually every evening. The hotel prospered.

What business had the meddlesome police here—here on the last shores of Atlantis? The gendarmes of the island came and caught Bernadis' daughters and the hotel maids playing at sea-nymphs, their skins coated with white greasepaint, their bodies realistically adorned with sham fish tails. . . .

Why should our lovely illusions be hounded down by Reason?

February 11. To-day everything seems strange to me. As though I had never seen it before. The real is commonplace only if one's view of it is outworn. An unexpected storm-cloud casts its sadness on the landscape; a movement alters a line, an angle; a shadow spreads its vulture's wings over a white wall—and strangeness is about us. It is in such changes that travel's rejuvenating virtue lies. The astonishing world is

everywhere, but habit hides it from us. Movement gives it us back again.

Travelling is a detergent, cleansing our senses and our brains. Put your head between your knees and look at a landscape upside down—it will seem extremely odd. Last year, on the way to Egypt, we had scarcely left port when the ship began to roll. Not very much, yet the movement was enough to make well-bred stomachs and their associated brains lose balance. Modesty went from those honest, careful bourgeois who believed so firmly in their place as centres of the world. Those thrifty men. For the first time they commune with the universal forces and give their lunches freely to the fish. A judge fancies that he hears sentence passed on him. A proud Colonial officer flings off his cape of azure lined with sunset; deflated, he surrenders and hands his sword to Nature. Others remain dignified beneath the cruel blows that Fortune is aiming at their bellies. Free-thinkers cry out, calling upon God and their mammas. Women turn beseeching eyes towards Notre Dame de la Garde, whose chapel is vanishing in the distance. In their distress the ladies cannot help feeling that the saint might get on a little more briskly with her job of protecting seafarers. They make devout and valiant efforts to contain themselves and to banish the impious thought, in fear lest the specialist, to whom they prayed so fervently this morning, should get angry. A solitary little blonde still has sufficient strength to try out affectionate and maternal blandishments on a Yankee financier, very busy at the moment saving his assets.

The advantage of revolutionary movements is that they shake men up, jerking them out of their usual stabilities, confronting them with unexpected situations, breaking down their old, accustomed habits of mind. The jolt may even produce totally unforeseen behaviour, extremely astonishing to those whom Fate has left in a more "normal" state. But the die is cast, a destiny has changed. Should the social squall become a gale, here is So-and-So, at an age when men commonly draw their pensions and start cuddling chorus girls, transformed into a Revolutionary minister! Gold braid and more

gold braid, ribbon after ribbon, star after star descend upon glorious Marshal Such-and-Such because the old dug-out has been caught in War's fortunate catastrophes. Bankruptcy shows its green bailiff-face, and into the dull brain of the shop-keeper there comes an inspiration of genius, an idea, maybe, that will make his fortune. Or on a smaller scale, within a nerve cell or within one of those well-balanced little worlds of which we are the gigantic assembly, an electron is divorced for some particular scandalous reason from its proton, and everything is changed: life becomes altogether new. Or, once again, it may be a cancer. Floupette slept out last night. Dupond is in despair. He throws his eyes to heaven and sees a God the Father cumulus, enthroned above a stretch of sky, holding out compassionate cirrus-arms. To Dupond, yesterday, the clouds would have been no more than vulgar rain-bags; or he would not even have seen them.

Artists alone have constant movements in their blood, toxins that shake them up, alter their vision of things. They alone do not need outside events to jerk them into liveliness. They are always being involved in problems they have not foreseen—intimate catastrophes that have precisely the same effects as the nasty knocks the average man encounters—and of which their works are the solutions. Well, well. They have a lot of bothers. And that one blessing. . . .

February 12. The Englishman Campbell has just broken the world's record with a speed of 231.363 miles per hour. A record like that means twenty years of collective mechanical experience, two years of preliminary designs by a peculiarly-gifted and hard-working engineer, ten years of blundered or faulty trials, several millions spent and the pilot's heroic pluck. When M. Leon Bollée broke the speed record by doing 50 kilometres an hour, he said: "I don't recommend anyone to go faster. It would mean the risk of suffocation. Sheer madness."

February 13. I have been showing Hanson a passage in *Après le Cubisme* (my first book, published in 1918, the first art book to appear after the War):

“Among the various natural laws there are one or two that are particularly valuable in plastic art. . . . Nature seems to work along the lines of infinitely complex axial forces. Certain axes are more important than others, for example in a tree, the trunk, the branches, the twigs, the leaves. . . .”

Notions of this sort were at the back of my Purist theories. I wanted Purism to be primarily a dictionary of fixed terms, of roots, of shapes expressing invariable ideas, an aesthetic theory of constants. It was not understood. It was considered in rather bad form. I can't help that. If what I did was of no use to those I did it for, it was at least of use to me. My mistake was to offer, not a stunt, but a way of thinking, I shall go on doing the same thing. No stunts. Consider this for a moment:

One's eyes take in millions of shapes at one glance. Usually they travel on unheeding. But sometimes it happens that a particular shape brings them up short—the profile of a moulding, of a medal, of a face, the sweep of an arch, maybe, or the outline of a typographical character, the features of an animal, of a saucepan, of a shoe, of this car or that 'plane, the mass or the parts of a picture or a piece of sculpture. What we see makes us halt and dream and ponder. We no longer behold the myriad surrounding shapes but only that one shape. For the moment it is the whole world. It is a strange thing this hypnosis that turns every sight but one into a mist. . . .

If you look more attentively at your object, you will see that its shape, the forms that give it its individual character, are a diagram of the active forces of creation, a visual tracing of the “movements” of the forces that are manifest in the outlines of bones and of living tissue, in the curling and uncurling of clouds and of women's hair, in the curves of shells, of waves, of breasts, in crystals, plants, cells, snow-flowers and ordinary flowers, fruit and the organs and limbs of beasts, in the phenomena of light, in the waves and all the avatars of electricity and in the shapes of machines. It is quite easy to draw the outlines of these forces in two dimensions, or to model in paint

or clay the typical "skew" surfaces they engender. It is enough to open any book on zoology, botany, physics, chemistry, human or celestial mechanics to see that the forms of these schemas are eminently plastic, that is to say exciting to the senses and the spirit. . . .

These forms, moreover, make us aware of the universal determinism. They awaken in us intuitions that are in some way biological—a consciousness of that Creation of which we are a part; they combine with our mind's knowledge of the life of things to give a double, simultaneous pleasure to intuition and to reason, and a strange, unknown warmth to the heart.

These Lines of Force—power-lines of power, living-lines of life—extracted, isolated from the bodies of which they are the essential laws, would seem to be the elements, the "roots" of art's purest language, the language used, perhaps unwittingly, by the artists of all the great periods. In reality, to use the shapes of the world-forces is a condition in the production of any good shape.

What has just been said on the elements of individual forms can no doubt be extended to the main lines—the orchestral leaders—of a composition. In other words: from the main lines of a work of art its general character can be determined.

The history of art reveals the wonderful expressiveness of the language. It is plain that in a work of art the presence of the "roots" and their extreme potency will lift even the humblest subject to a high level. So, three apples in a fruit dish, or even three cubistic shapes, or a purely formal pattern in a carpet, can have the deepest effects on us. Like the poems of Mallarmé. Deeper than their authors ever foresaw. . . .

February 14. "Everything can be brought back to unity," said Montaigne.

A delicious impatience. . . .

I am very much afraid that the bases of reality will always escape our senses. Yet I have a good nose and a good heart; it seems to me that I can sense the emanations of the unknowable. I can communicate with it. We would like to give that Unknowable a face. Where Nature jeers at our passion for

unity, we make a unity for ourselves in art. And there no man can say us nay; we are not gods.

So we break our backs trying to understand the principles of what we do. Read Baudelaire's *Romantic Art*:

"I am sorry for the poets who are guided solely by their instincts. I feel they are incomplete. In the spiritual life of the best poets a crisis infallibly occurs when they wish to reason out their art, to discover the obscure laws that govern its production and to draw lessons from that study. . . ."

And to think that people cry: "Hi! Boileau!" as soon as one begins to examine one's ideas and to theorise about one's work. . . .

Reason, feel, reason, feel—and then sum up.

There is only one way of being complete: to feel the mystery of the cosmos passionately, to delight in it as such, and then to clarify it through abstractions. I want to enjoy the world's waves for their own sake, to wed them, as one's skin, swimming, weds the sea. I like to go through the water by thrusting the power of my muscles into its power. But as I go I like to make pictures in my head of the forces that surround me and issue from me, so that my consciousness and my senses take their active share in the world. At such moments I have the feeling that I hold both the known and the unknowable. A twofold unison, mirror of man's darkness and of man's light. . . .

"Why," asks Mr. But, "do you waste your energies arguing instead of painting?"

"My dear fellow. I paint all day and write as soon as the day is gone."

"You'd do better to sleep."

"I sleep very well."

"Then when do you get your fun?"

"All the time."

February 15. Wrote "It is impossible to look at the sky", for the *Intransigent*.

In the *Place de la Concorde*, round about 1905, an old man and his mate, a very ancient telescope, used to show you, price twopence, the Moon and Saturn and "the Comet". Thanks to the Faustian couple, many old Parisians had a glimpse of matters that set them thinking. What have the young got nowadays?

The old showman of the stars must have finally taken himself to heaven; the old telescope must be sleeping with the dead moons.

How many people do you know—in this scientific age!—who have ever, in all their lives, looked through a telescope? You are lucky if you can find one in ten thousand. Fantastic! But of course in Paris it is impossible to look into the sky for the good reason that there is no free observatory.

There should be one in every big town. So that we may see our own relativity, so that we may see that we know nothing. To find out from the stars that one knows nothing is to find out a good deal more than other people think they know, thereby finding out something about them! At the present time the professed lovers of mystery prefer false mysteries to that mystery of mysteries—reality.

"What is the use of looking at the sky?" ask the people who want quick returns for their money. General Balbo, organiser of the memorable hydroplane flight, to America, has answered them:

"For their flights by starlight all the crews were trained with a planetarium. The planetarium in this case was a hemispherical model of the night sky. An ingenious mechanism made it possible to show the exact place of every star on every day of the year. The crews were thus able to study with great precision the position of the stars on the night, the 5th of January 1931, of their leaving Bolama for the most difficult part of their course." The General added: "The Germans handed the planetarium over to us after the War under the heading of Reparations."

No one in France has thought of giving us a planetarium¹. The German, the Swiss, the American, the Bulgarian, if he wants to get away from this crisis-ridden planet, can go to his public observatory and look at the sky. The cost is only a few ha'pence. Escape, meditation, a heightened sense of the universal, serenity, restored vigour. . . .

A German came to see me. His eyes were of an extraordinarily bright blue. The French have a good dose of Germanic blood: Galatian, Cimbrian, Belgian, Suevian, Visigoth, Burgundian, Lombard, Northman, Alemanni, Frank. Yet our German cousins alone have kept a deep feeling of the world's unity. They are poets. All their great novelists, if they write of women's hearts, remember the great system in which these small motor-pumps play their part. With most of our writers everything turns on events that have to do with the action of organs in a bedroom.

Certain German historians believe that their people, being of the same race as the Greeks, have inherited the Greek genius. There was a serious outbreak at one time of Dorian style. Such Mediterranean pretensions on the part of a northern people were considered very funny. Good faith should make us acknowledge, nevertheless, that there is a sort of kinship, or at least an analogy, between the German's constant preoccupation with the cosmos and the Hellenic love of Nature-myths.

The Greeks understood the speech of streams. Germans go to their swimming pools—and heaven knows they have enough of them!—to commune with the pagan water. In France we go into the water to wash, or to give our skins pleasure, or to compete in swimming races.

In our schools a few lessons on cosmography, dry, brief affairs, are grudgingly stolen, half an hour here, half an hour there, from the more "serious" studies. I have often thought that the Frenchman's only real inferiority with the regard

¹ *Note 1937.* Or in England either. There was a planetarium at the Paris Exhibition. It will, I fear, remain there.

The English love nature. Overheard one night on the Boulogne-Folkestone boat—Two Englishwomen gazing at the sky: "Darling! Do you know about stars?" "No, darling. But they're so lovely. So, so lovely. . . ."

to the German resides in his astonishing, narrow realism that knows the real only as the immediate. Yet nothing would be easier than to instil into our children something of the restless spirit, the breadth of outlook that is the true generator of powerful lyricism, big minds and wide activities, all-embracing sciences and philosophies, poets like Goethe.

It is inevitable that civilisations, as they become more sophisticated, should become in certain directions poorer; the excessive use of reason ends by sterilising instinct and intuition. Younger nations keep their curiosity; traces of paganism linger in them; they are still in contact with the great Forces. If we, from time to time, silenced our reasoning machine, we should hear again in ourselves the ancient German voices. It would prevent us, who are not Greeks, from being only too often narrow-minded little know-alls.

Ideas, as they grow in subtlety, reject all that is not immediately perceptible to the everyday mind—all those unknown realities that are revealed to us in contemplation, that come to us in waves that no instrument has as yet caught save the passive, contemplative brain. Children know them and child-like races, artists, mystics, Germans and Anglo-Saxons.

Paris-Soir gave an account recently of a case at the Cour d'Assises, the trial of a man called Ayraud. Counsel for the defence undertook a most difficult task, says *Paris-Soir*, but "came out of it with great honour". He said of the accused: "In order to save Simone Bordes from prostitution, he needed money. No sooner had he struck Mme Tillès than he went to the Church of the Madeleine and burnt a candle for the recovery of his victim. Prison finally unhinged his mind. He wished to learn astronomy."

The wind has just thrown down a pile of my most carefully classified notes. I like to follow the old saying: "A place for everything and everything in its place." Order in the things about us helps us to order our ideas. Yet that which is always still impresses its stillness on us. An order that has lasted too long may become a drag; it is out of date, out of step with our new selves. It is an excellent thing, every now and then, to

kick over one's card-indexes, real and intellectual. When several files of records and documents have been sent flying and their contents tossed like leaves in a gale, when some first-class act of imprudence has changed the course of one's life and made hay of one's spiritual and emotional habits, one must sit down and tidy, one must examine, check, rearrange the papers, the feelings, the thoughts. One seldom fails to discover in the course of the inventory, some useful idea that has been forgotten, and a considerable number of others for which one can find no excuse whatever and that must be thrown instantly into the dustbin. Which gives more room. And makes for modesty; it shows that one is just as capable as other people of talking nonsense and acting foolishly. So it is altogether a profitable proceeding.

A Census is being taken of the French population. We are all required to fill in forms. An official formula: "A person living alone constitutes a household."

Dream. I dreamt last night that I was in New York. I was going along a straight, wide way, like the Champs Elysées but still wider and longer. I knew the place well, having been there before in a dream. At the end of it is the European Station. No mistake about that—it is the station of Nantes. I was walking with a woman. On the left were tall houses that had been gutted by fire. Their skeletons were adorned, as the ruins are in Rome, with ivy, climbing roses, Virginia creeper, flowering clematis.

These ancient remains left standing in the midst of the ultra-new, astonished me. But of course I understood: Americans love ruins. Having none of their own, they have kept the ruins of burnt houses. Neo-ruins.

Love-terms: My precious, that becomes in course of time my preshy, my presh, my preshoo, my bishoo, my bish, my pidge, my pigeon, my pridegeon and at last my precious, which sounds most odd. I expect a pervert, falling by accident into the normal, must find it very strange, almost perverted.

February 16. Study for the group "infant at the breast", for my picture *LIFE*. The child's skull shines. It sets free a memory that is astonishingly vivid, clear to the smallest details. The starting-point is the colour. Orange, the egg-yellow colour of sunset, the little bluish reflections that play in the shadows. Here is the memory:

My grandfather Saugnier had a blow-pipe, a very long and very sumptuous blow-pipe. Its tube was of the best copper, its casing of fuchsia-purple mahogany. With an ivory knob screwed on one end, it made an elegant walking-stick. We used it and its little putty bullets extensively. When we ran out of the regulation munitions we renewed our stock with June berries of suitable calibre, red and ripe with pink juices. At a little distance from the road, under cover of a bush, we fired on the passers-by.

That evening, at sunset, we tramped back, my brother, my cousin and I, from Fayet to St. Quentin. I carried the blow-pipe over my shoulder and felt I was the perfect hunter and soldier.

In the suburbs, by the barracks, not far from the inn "My Fancy" I caught sight of a small child playing in the gutter. There was scarcely any hair on its head; the tight skin shone brightly in the low light (the skull of the "infant at the breast" that awakened the memory). The shining thing excited me. I aimed and took a deep breath. The berry scored a bull; the skull ran with scarlet.

I was appalled. Who would have thought that one small berry . . . The child sat there screaming, its little hands clutching at its head. The mother ran out of a dark alley. Her shrieks of horror mingled with those of her baby. In a moment an angry crowd collected, waving and tossing its arms like branches in a mighty storm. Tumultuously it rushed to save the little victim. Fists were shaken in our faces. The wound, being wiped, was discovered to be no wound but pink juices and fragments of berry. I must say it looked very alarming.

The mother screamed louder than ever that "she had been scared for nothing".

February 18. To the Louvre to see the "Ariadne", the fine bronze cast that the Kellers made from the ancient marble. Feminine to the limit of virility. The old chatterbox of a keeper knows me well; he has watched me for years past standing before this same superb woman, turning round her, touching, caressing the bronze. He answers my greeting familiarly and winks: "Eh, eh! So you still like her?"

I don't know what is in his mind.

Dream. I am to drive a motor-bus. Starting at the Porte D'Orléans, I try the strength of the brakes and admire the excellence of the acceleration. First rate. A real racing motor-bus. I go towards the Opéra (the bus-line Porte d'Orléans-Opéra is the one I most often take). At the Lion de Belfort I break out in a terrible cold sweat. Is it to the Opéra that I am to drive the passengers? I wonder anxiously how I can solve this awful problem from where I am; the driver's seat is so painfully in evidence. I lean over and try to read the placard on the side of the bus that says where it is going. I read it and start off brilliantly. I have forgotten where it was I was supposed to be going.

I am dreaming a lot. . . . A naval fight. A large but very ancient battleship crosses the Place de l'Etoile near the Avenue Carnot. I am one of the crew of a small, extremely fast cruiser. I am expecting the guns to start firing any minute. They do not. We begin to steam at a prodigious speed round and round the enemy ship. Each time we turn we pass beneath the Arc de Triomphe, carefully avoiding the Unknown Soldier's light so as not to be burnt. The flame is rising out of the water. I can't understand why we don't fire. The sailors implore the captain to give the order to fire. The enemy ship goes full speed down the Champs Élysées and disappears at the Tuileries. We let it go. I ask to be put down at the rue de Presbourg, by Claridge's Hotel, where a woman friend is waiting for me. We discuss the dangers I shall run in the war, and she sews on one of my buttons that is hanging by a thread.

The fast cruiser: probably a memory of what a sailor said to me last year at Honfleur on the *Tourville* (I think): "Our speed is so great that in a fight we shall be practically invulnerable." The light of the Unknown Soldier burning in the water: possibly a memory of the Stromboli volcano, seen last year blazing in the middle of the sea. As for the woman at Claridge's . . . ?

February 19. Study for the "swarming" in *LIFE*. A mass of men, women and children swarming like maggots.

February 21. Read in the *Illustration*, "Ispahan" by Mme de Lyée de Belleau:

"Often while I am at work young Persians gather round me. My presence is a chance for them to practise their French. I like their soft, singing speech.

"But how far they are from us and how little they know of our ways! Another time, while I was sweating blood over the perspective in a sketch, a youth came up to me and said kindly, full of pity for my troubles: 'You know, there are photographic cameras that will make your picture for you much faster than that!'"

The lady seems not to have understood. . . .

Ruskin tells a story of how Turner, in the early part of his life, being sometimes in a good humour, would show people his work. One day he had been drawing Plymouth Harbour with a number of ships a mile or two away, seen against the light. A naval officer to whom he showed his drawing was astonished, and remarked with justifiable indignation that the ships of the line had no port-holes.

"No," said Turner. "Certainly not. If you go up Mt. Edgecumbe and look at the ships against the sunset, you'll find that you can't see the port-holes."

"That may be," said the officer, "but you know that there are port-holes."

"Oh yes," said Turner. "I know that well enough. But my business is to draw what I see, not what I know."

Personally I think that the naval officer was right and the painter wrong. What makes it all the more absurd is that Turner, in fact, painted his own dreams, using the things he saw merely as elements in the picture. He also had not understood.

And that is the whole point of Cubism. The Cubists, like the Classics, drew what they felt rather than what they saw.

Sunday. February 22. Worked very hard. Am a bit tired. The weather is demoralising. We must get out, out of this sticky town. Walking is a good way of distracting the attention.

Went to Robinson, the paradise of the romantic counter-jumper. Girls. Refreshments served on platforms in the branches of big chestnut trees. Dancing. Dreamily we wandered on to see Jean Paulhan who lives in this dream-place. And there we found Reason in the shape of Julien Benda. He is taking a "rest", writing in Chateaubriand's old home, now Dr. Le Savoureux's rest-house.

Monsieur Benda said that "the way people nowadays give such extensive credit, blindly, to every schoolboy who wants to write", seemed to him excessive.

I suggested that everything nowadays is based on credit. As one can see from the crises on the Stock Exchange. Sheer gambling. In the old days you lent your money to established firms, companies that had something to show for themselves. Now you subscribe at once to any anonymous company, on the strength of its projects, of its promises, sometimes merely on the strength of its youth.

At another time Monsieur Benda said: "I had the luck to be a Jew. We have to be better than the others."

I, who am not a Jew, had my large nose and my English sponge-bag trousers to make me detestable to my fellow students. In those days the smart thing for artists was to dress like guttersnipes.

He said also that if one removed the sensitiveness from Barres' writing, nothing much would remain. But what remains of a poem if you take away the poetry? Or of a Benda

if you take away the intelligence? When I started for Robinson, province of Romanticism, to pay Chateaubriand a visit, I was thinking of the work of that great poet and admiring the beauties that a certain unreason can bring forth from the limbo of the mind. In future when I go there I shall think of Monsieur Benda and ponder on the beauties that a lively brain can make clear.

Going home we passed the Paris cemetery of Grand Mont-rouge, known as the cemetery of Bagneux. On the immense fields of death very ancient trees still grow. No doubt many of them saw the days of which the old song tells, when young people used to come here by the great woods to pick strawberries.

Ah qu'il fait bon, qu'il fait donc bon cueillir la fraise
Au bois de Bagneux

Quand on est deux,

Quand on est deux.

Mais quand on est trois, quand on est trois, Mamzelle
Thérèse,

C'est bien ennuyeux.

Vaudrait mieux n'être que deux!

Sinister attributes adorn the monumental entrance of the Cemetery—hour-glasses, funeral garlands, crosses and yet more crosses. . . . Against the long wall that extends on either side are stalls, their shelves piled high with flowers and wreaths. The flower-sellers stand correctly by, their hands crossed on their round bellies, decently and universally compassionate, receiving “the bereaved” who want flowers for the funeral, or to lay beside the “sepulchre”. They know the proper terms, the genteel expressions. It is the Wall of Lamentation, of memories and regrets, of the Past. On the other side of the road is Trade and the Present—cafés like those of Suresnes or Damascus, painted in cheerful greens: “Au Père la Moule”; “Marbrerie à la Grace de Dieu.” At their doors, stout, smiling girls are cooking chips and mussels. Sorrow makes you hungry. Have a good drink and a little something to eat: “You must keep up your strength, dearie.” Before the café “Chez l’ami

Jojo" a woman in deep mourning, her eyes dull behind her thick veil, sits waiting for her man to wake. He sleeps, his nose by his plate, almost touching the empty mussel-shells. The nose nods and strikes a shell. He wakes, opens his eyes, sees the gate of the Cemetery.

He stares, haggard with fear . . . Dead?

Then smiles broadly . . . Alive!

"Mary! Would you like a rum and coffee?"

"No, Jules. A brandy."

"We're better off here than over the way, eh, my girl?"

Youngsters swarm on to the Porte d'Orléans motor-bus—a franc a seat for the whole distance—and off they go towards the town, towards life. Others run for the wobbling old tram that goes to Robinson. There will be dancing there, and kissing and cuddling on the way. Plenty of babies owe their births to funerals.

A little girl said: "We're going to Bagneux to see my little sister."

"Your little sister lives at Bagneux?"

"Yes. She's planted there."

Simplicity, poverty—these, too, are life. Our long walks help me tremendously while I am composing. They rest and nourish me. The ideas I come upon may seem very far from my work, yet I know that they contribute to it.

February 27. A journalist put me through the third degree all the morning. He did not go till 12.30. I had to lunch in a hurry—fish, worse luck; two herrings; it's always the same way!—being most anxious to hear records of Niña de las Peinas at one o'clock on the wireless. But her songs are badly recorded. I did not recover all the thrills I had in Seville.

Niña is, of course, the queen of Andalusian folk-lore, the heiress and guardian of the hispano-moorish genius. In the cheap Andalusian cabaret the gypsy brings to life the dreaming silences of the Ommiades, the rulers of Cordova, city of white walls and red drama. Yet, by some secret inheritance, the race of Seneca endures in her also. Spain was first Greek, then

Roman, then Arab, Andalusian, Spanish. With Niña, genius of balance and of silence, one goes from an abstract sweetness and freshness to the trivialities of the market-place. She modulates her voice till breath seems spent. The notes hover, rise, rise, raise you like a lark to the sun, then fling you down into a patio where the fountain weaves the green square of the water to the blue square of the sky. The voice turns geometric and draws, with delicate precision, hypnotic arabesques upon the air. She was an Arab, now she is a Castilian. She walks slowly, so slowly that her movement is almost a stillness; her impassive, gliding step moves to the beat of the most subtle desires; and the splendid heavy velvets of her dress follow her. . . . Abruptly she is of the East again. She ripples from head to foot, and at the shock a hard shiver of pleasure runs up from your loins to your neck. A rhythm starts from her finger-tip, striking like steel on her strong palm, precise as machine-gun fire. The silence and the snapping fingers govern the beating of your heart, stop your breathing, restore it, cut it off again, play with you. The voice drops—a dizzying fall that she controls by means so subtle that no musical notation could set it down, but that one's instinct enjoys as it would enjoy the exactness of a fine algebraic curve. Niña creates a medium of sound that is metallic, accurate to the point of cruelty, yet supple as a steel spring. It moves one to such a passion that now, for an instant, a lump comes in one's throat for fear of a "wrong" note. That the wonder of her accuracy should be made clear, she has attacked her final cadenza flat, the merest hair's breadth flat. Then, smiling, she draws herself up and ends on a triumphant perfect cry.

Strange power of an art that gathers the senses, the spirit and the heart into one and plays on that keyboard. . . .

At that moment in Seville I understood what folk-lore is—how, in fact, the people's "lore" and their arts are the sum of a thousand generations of effort, the perfect conclusions, reached after myriads of attempts, and that have survived through the years precisely because they were perfectly

human. They are the successes; they express universal sentiments, satisfy universal needs. It is for this reason that the ancient arts of the people are very much alike in all countries. The varying temperature of the blood calls forth varying degrees of heat, warmth, cold, but the tune is always the same: death, love, despair, joy, the passions of the motherland—elementary feelings expressed in ways that must be called, not primitive, although they come from farthest time, but definite, final, since they still move us, the men of the “modern” cities, so profoundly. The music, the tales, the dances, the ancient popular carvings stir our unchanged humanity, reawaken old, forgotten tracks. . . .¹

The ancient roots . . . The Andalusian songs are the work of prehistoric man, of Phoenicians, Greeks, Moors, Jews, Spaniards. And what is a Spaniard but a little of all these races and traditions? The Catalonians are the outcome of no less various stocks. One seems to be hearing an Iberian song when suddenly the solo fife plays a Greek mode—a memory perhaps of colonial Greece? The vigorous rhythm of the tenor hautboys makes Visigothic glories live again. And here are the murmurs of pine-trees in the wind, a whispering of twigs, a breath of bitter rosins and the sea, Mireille and Magali, a whistling upon the sands, a rustling of small, hot, scented grasses—the music of Provence. . . .

I confess that when the old singer Niña of the Sorrows sang in that shabby Seville music-hall, my eyes were full of tears. The same thing happened to me in sight of Jerusalem, but no other music has ever had this effect. I would not speak of it if it were not a sign of ordinary humanity. Music of this sort stirs that which is strongest in us, our “constants”, and that which is most weak.

At the present time when we are all becoming increasingly conscious of social responsibility, it occurs to me that this is a serious question: “Is art a form of selfishness?”

In art the egoism of others becomes our egoism. The voice of the gypsy, crying her passion, her personal dream, whether

¹ See Part I.

real or imaginary, is the voice of our common passion, our common tragedy. So the "self" can serve the community.

Individual art can be social on condition that it answers a general need. This thought is always with me while I work. I do not wish to be of service only to myself.

What I have just set down has done me good, given me courage. One can't have too much courage these days—these terrible days when it is so hard to see one's duty, when artists can so easily appear just shoddy actors.

February 28. Migraine. I have a violent love of the completed task. I force myself to go slow, but it is an act of will; all the time I am burning to be done with it and to get on to the work that is waiting for me. I could have been a prolific improviser. The conflict between the two is more painful than people think. And I must say that if my own life is going badly, so is *LIFE*. Will . . . But I must wait till to-morrow. The migraine is giving me the most suicidal hump. . . .

March 3. A scrap, still, of migraine. The weather is delicious. The sun has been trumpeting all the morning. The air is too attractive, I must go out. The walk's object, my excuse for taking it, is to go to the Parc Montsouris and find a good place for a public observatory. The migraine has gone. Still, I feel slack enough to allow myself a morning off.

I walked musing, unfaithful to the Muses I have trained to come and help me every day, present yet discreetly invisible from nine in the morning till eight at night. But Nature is all colour to-day, and I could no longer resist the joys of it. I hurried back and began to lay paint on my big study. Voluptuous delight of fiddling with the lovely unctuous heaps of red, of green, of white, of blue, of black. . . . The painter's orgy! By evening Night soared in her corner and one of the blue figures of Air was born.

During the winter one should accumulate ideas, stuff oneself with desires, prepare the ground and wait for the spring, which is the time when pressure rises, the season that favours growth. It is in the spring that things are accomplished.

March 4. Went on with the main outlines of my picture. Had a tremendous go at the sky. Couldn't resist the cadmiums.

But in the evening I am scratching my head doubtfully. Was I justified in putting Night on the right, Twilight on the left? This makes the whole action of the picture go from right to left. Is that the most effective movement in painting?

Can the directions used in writing give me any tips? Like the Greeks, the Romans and the Brahmins in Sanscrit, we write from left to right. But Hebrew, Arabic and the writing of Easter Island go the opposite way. There were Greek dialects that were written first to the right and then to the left "like oxen tilling". The Chinese and Japanese write from the top of the page downwards. So there is nothing to be found here, no constants.

We are right-handed. We start with the right foot foremost. Everyone who speaks of movement—unless a right-to-left motion is deliberately specified—spontaneously waves his hand from left to right. This constant is against me. I must be wrong. On the maps, the sun travels from right to left. But that is a convention. So I have obeyed a convention? That is against my determined feeling for constants.

Yet . . . One's right arm, being the strongest, gives a virtual power to a right-hand space. So if I had, contrary to my present arrangement, put Twilight-end-death on the right, I should be attributing the chief place to Death? My intention is to make a symphony showing the whole human adventure; its obscure origins, its full flowering to its inevitable end. But I am not painting the triumph of Death. So I must keep the genesis of life on the right—in the zone of strength.

Another reassuring tendency:

We are right-handed, the muscles of our necks draw our heads, our looks, more willingly towards the right. It is a fact that one's eyes go first to the right-hand side of a picture, especially if it is a big picture, and that one often keeps them there longest. Which gives predominance to the right-hand side. All the better.¹

¹ *Note 1934.* Mr. David Craiz, in *American Photography*, asks an interesting question: "Given a negative, does it matter if you print its normal aspect or the opposite?" As an example the author shows you a view of a factory with the

One may have years of experience, one may have collated and set down for oneself the clearest precepts, one may have method and will, yet it can still happen that one is overcome by old, evil passions or by the pernicious advice of other people. In this case the pernicious counsellor was the sun and its painting the Parc Montsouris the other morning in cadmiums and vermilions and emerald greens. I yielded too quickly to the joys of bright colour. My picture has not yet reached its hour of spring. Now I am expelling the intruders. Yet the yellow ochres I am trying in place of the cadmiums are still too strong; they draw attention to themselves, not to the thought they should convey. They are actors who strut for their own sakes, not for the sake of the parts allotted to them. Have never yet managed to combine vivid and neutral tones.¹

I started painting at school in 1902. I used the brightest colours out of hatred for everything that recalled the greasy soil, the mud of the Picardy winter—the abominable mud that made bicycles skid. With time, with forgetfulness of miserable Sunday walks, of feet weighed down by the sticky clay, with the sight of Southern lands where the earth is dry and velvety, I have come to see the beauty of the earth's ochres. Now when I go home to Picardy its ochres seem lovely to me.

Renoir said: "Happy old masters who only knew how to use ochres and browns!" At that time Renoir was restricting his colours to red ochres, yellow ochres and green ochres.

March 6. Very anxious about my starlit sky. . . .

Without being narrowly naturalistic, I believe that it is a good thing in art to respect the ways of Nature wherever one

smoke of its chimneys blowing from left to right. He then shows you the same view with the smoke blowing in the contrary direction. The first picture undoubtedly gives a sense of movement that the second lacks. The author considers that this sensation is due to our habit of writing from left to right, and that a Japanese, a Chinese, a Hebrew, might not feel it, since their writing habits are different.

One can study the point by looking at photographs or drawings that reproduce movement and comparing them with their appearance in a mirror (*Photo Revue*).

¹ *Note 1937.* At last! This summer, after six years of continence, I am letting myself go to the delight of making all the brightest colours of the palette sing on the canvas. . . .

can do so without losing "plastic" quality. Contrary to most painters, it seems to me right to turn the horns of the moon away from the sun. Whether one likes it or not, one must always, in some manner, obey Nature. . . . In fact I believe that the more we succeed in incorporating the natural laws in our work, the more they will help us to obtain a unity. This was one of the lessons of the Parthenon.

The anomaly of the moon's horns being turned towards the sun may give a happy combination of shapes, but it is very disturbing to those who know that Nature did not mean it that way. The spectator has to make allowances for the painting—an effort that is bound to turn him from the dream the painter was endeavouring to draw him into. It is not good to take liberties; I have discovered that to my cost. In a landscape of mine called *Sisteron* the moon's horns are wrong. You can see it from the direction of the shadows, which show the direction of the sun. I had allowed myself to be trapped by a "painter's licence", the sort of laxity that I have come, since, to hate. I rechristened the landscape *Sisteron with the astronomical error*, but, in spite of the precaution, whenever I look at the picture I see only its fault.

March 11. *LIFE.* I wanted to give the illusion, on Night's darkness, of a stretch of stars. It has not come off. It looks like motes of dust in a ray of sunlight. Yet that, really, is not so very different from the night sky. If I take a snapshot of a ray of sunshine in a dark room and look only at the specks shining against the black, I have a moderately good likeness of the sky's seeming disorder. But that is not what I want. I want a sky that fits the idea we have formed of the world's order, a sky such as we *want* to see. The painter's world must be a humanised world. I did the opposite. I struck my brush against a ruler; particles of colour splashed on to the night's blue blackground. I did this eight, ten, twenty times, and got a very natural-looking portrait of the Milky Way. But, like the Milky Way, it was without axis, without pretence of symmetry, without any clear law, hence unfitted to my picture. The follies one can commit, even though one has thought so long

on these subjects, are quite incredible. I am profoundly convinced that one should never count on Fortune—who was so kind, according to Montaigne, to my colleague Protogenes, a painter of the stodgy school so far as I can judge:

“He, having painted the shape of a weary, worn-out dog and being greatly content therewith in all its parts save one, which he could not represent, namely the foam and slaver of the dog, becoming enraged with his task, flung his sponge, all drenched as it was with divers colours, at his picture, to the end that it might be blotted out. But Fortune, of a sudden, carried the blow to the spot where the dog’s mouth was and thereby furnished to admiration that which art had been unable to achieve.”

Rather listen to Baudelaire:

“Nothing could be more impertinent or more stupid than to talk to a great artist, a scholar and thinker like Delacroix, of the debts he may owe to the god of chance. It simply makes one shrug one’s shoulders in pity. There is no chance in art any more than there is in mechanics. A happy discovery is merely the result of sound reasoning in which some of the intermediary steps have been left out. A fault is the result of false reasoning. A picture is a machine of which all the parts are intelligible to a practised eye; where everything has its justification, if the picture is good; where one tone is always destined to enhance the value of the next; where an occasional mistake in drawing is sometimes necessary in order to preserve some other more important feature.”

To look forward with assurance to breaking the bank, you must have millions at your disposal, and even then you can only hope to get back your original stake. What artist can make the number of haphazard gestures needed to turn the wild beast chance into a domestic cow, amiably allowing

herself to be milked of masterpieces? *The life of a man is not a million hours.*

As for writers: "However great a talker he may be, a man cannot speak more than a milliard words in his lifetime," said Henri Poincaré.¹

"Yet the bank can be broken with a hundred francs," said a sort of Mr. But.

"That's exactly what is tempting my old friend René. He is a professor of Latin, and he has been spending his miserable salary at the Casinos for the last thirty years. And Paul says the same. For forty years he has started out every morning to track down his masterpiece and has come home with an empty bag for lunch."

Of course a painter may, in the course of his life, paint one great picture by chance. One. He has been copying it ever since. He banked this false success and made a thousand variations of it, the lucky punter! It reminds one of the learned men in Gulliver who drew words out of a hat, arranged them into phrases and kept those that had any sense.

I will suggest a compromise. Luck can sometimes serve a man. A bad gunner misses one ship, destroys another. A lucky hit! He had better stick to it and go no further. Otherwise he might someday hit himself in the behind. Fortunately the one victory brought him rank and honours, and now it is he who directs the firing.

G. Benac in *L'Auto*: "No doubt that was how he got killed?" I suggested to the aficionado. "Not at all," said he. "The bull's horn should have passed at least an inch from his body. What happened was that he had to do with a clumsy bull. The horn was in a position it should not have been."

I once knew a brilliant engineer. He came out of the schools with every imaginable honour. He used to drive his car through Paris at break-neck speed, taking all his cross-roads without slowing down. The chances of an accident, he said, were infinitesimal. His brilliant mathematical learning had allowed

¹ *Note.* Paul Valéry (Monsieur Teste): "Henceforth, the milliards of words that have buzzed in my ears . . ."

him to work out the odds to a nicety. Last month there was scarcely anything left of him or his car. Now he is in the paradise of probabilities. A nice boy. And a nice theory.¹

March 13. The sun excites the gardening instinct and gardening excites the artist. To paint with real passion one must feel one is a natural force performing its natural function. Intimacy with the earth gives one the sense of being a small wheel in a machine. I dug over and manured the soil in our tiny flower-beds. Nothing, it seems, will make the ivy grow. It is a finicking plant that objects to cat's piss. My garden is the nightly paradise for the toms of the neighbourhood. Throughout the spring they make whoopee here with their favourites.

The day is fine, spring-like. Oh! to be beneath the olive trees! What should I want to be entirely happy? A *mas*. One of those small white farms set in an olive grove on the stepped terraces of a hill. Two wedded fig trees would make lively the humming of the bees in the hive. The grass would be stiff as little knives in the rocky soil, among the pot-herbs, the thyme, the myrtle, the aromatic plants whose scent is distilled by the warm, dry air, spread by the sun. In the bushes are all the creatures of the Classics, the big red-brown ant, the musical cicada, the thrilling cricket and the rustic grasshopper, the subtle lizard, the beetle that is also of Memphis, a thousand little neatly-designed beings, dry, brisk, cleanly. There would be an old well; the path would curve modestly; two huge antique oil-jars, with aloes growing in them, would stand beside the door, to remind you that Provence is a Greek land. A cock and a few busy hens would look well in the landscape. The *mas* would date from one of the Louis centuries, but whitewash would make it younger year by year, renewing its innocence. A balustraded terrace would stretch before its

¹ *Note 1933.* Sir James Jeans writes: "Huxley said that if six monkeys were put in front of six typewriters and made to strike the keys haphazard for several million years, they would eventually produce all the books in the British Museum." This should please our lovers of Chance. All the same, although my reason must admit the possibility, I still have a vague idea and a very definite feeling that the sonnets of Shakespeare would not be tapped out by the type-writing monkeys.

windows; ancient yews would give it shade; a plane-tree would look out over the undulating valley, and through the branches space would lead towards a headland where the sea and the sky, mingled in the same blue, would be the Mediterranean.

I want to put all these feelings into *LIFE*.

But I have no little *mas*, and may never have one.

March 16. In the *Life of Ingres*, by Jacques Fouquet, I find the painter saying:

“The old masters professed to keep every object in their pictures separate. It is a principle that they all more or less followed and that has been especially attacked by modern painters whose principle is precisely the opposite: everything should be linked together. . . .

“The rule that would have every object separate in a picture or a bas-relief comes from the wish to express beauty fully and to reveal it in the development of every individual line. They would never have consented, as we do, to sacrifice considerable portions of a figure by hiding them behind neighbouring figures.”

The words please me immensely; they confirm my views. From boyhood I have felt how deeply our natures love the Whole, the All contained in the One. Look at the success of the dictionaries that profess to be “complete”, to tell us all about everything! There is even a very small one called *Tout en Un*. . . . It is the ancient and eternal classic principle of “Multiplicity in Unity”, a good Leibnitzian definition of our need. Since 1918, wishing to do work that would have both intensity and complexity, I have deliberately striven to *link* but *without hiding*.

I came to it, not through the direct example of the old masters, but as a result of my wish to give back to objects, after their dissection by the Cubists, their typical and integral identity, their essential constants, a need to restore to them their *wholeness*. It was one of the chief basic principles of my

"Purist" attempts. I am striving hard to follow this rule with *LIFE*.

March 18. What a strange silence has fallen upon the arts! We have lived through the apotheosis of Cézanne, the violent libertarianism of the Fauves, the exciting birth of Cubism and the fifteen years of its victories, the noisy anarchy of the Dadas, the warm spring of the *Esprit Nouveau*, the tumultuous dawn of Surrealism. Then came the Golden Age: the brilliant contracts, the lightning fortunes, the speeded-up mass-production of the Ford painters. Since the slump an awful vacancy has come upon us. The new idleness has left the factory-painters without strength and without desires, accustomed as they were to studios papered in cheques and newspaper notices, resounding to the happy burlblings of critics. Not a sound anywhere! What a good moment for tasks that are long and exacting, what an invitation to careful thinking, careful accomplishment, what a chance to do, to perfect, each man to the extreme limit of his powers, or a little beyond them if possible. . . .

In *LIFE*, I have allowed myself not a single accessory, not one drapery, tool, plant, flower or floweret, tree, shrub, none of your anecdotal elements that are so handy for filling up gaps. I won't have any obliging "pegs" to help me out. They don't simplify my problem.

Further sketches for the "swarm" idea. I had wanted a swarming of little, worm-like figures on bright grass. Their liveliness would have helped to link the bottom of the picture with the prismatic colours of the sky. But the green roared like a wild beast, and the little bodies were swallowed up.¹

On a rolling stretch of brown earth, in place of the savage green that had to be strangled, I will put shining flesh; the anthropocentric idea will be strengthened, and the brightness will make the link I want between the colours at the top and those at the bottom, suggesting the benefits that the sun showers on the earth. Fire, pearl, earth, that's all! Well, you try.

¹ *Note 1933.* It will be seen presently that I was at this moment making the mistake that I was condemning in others; perhaps because I felt it obscurely in myself.

Even though one's object may be to awaken a sense of the universal, the first place must still be given to man. When we consider our world we consider a world as conceived by man. The vacuity of many ambitious pictures comes from the fact that the painter, intending to express the immensity of space, has made man appear too small. As the centre governs the circumference, so does man govern his world.

March 19. *LIFE.* Shall I give the outline of the hills a similar shape to the outline of the resting woman?

Will this repeated movement impress on the mind the conception of a universal unity?

These colours are very painful—approximations only to what I wanted. Being unfitted to the idea, they make a caricature of it.

My chief task, now, is to recover the original purity.

Difficulty of combining the concrete and the mythical. . . .

Give it up? But I don't like lazy solutions. I could do it well enough if I were a bigger man. I must try to become so.

March 20. The rain has come back with the new moon. So has my migraine. I dip the glue-brush in the ink-pot. I am all intuition!

"The Trout", Schubert's charming lied, is sung so often on the Wireless that I had quite forgotten it was good to eat. I had a rainbow trout for lunch. We often ate them at Magnac-sur-Touvre in 1914. It was the War. The poachers caught them, not in the Schubert manner, but with charges of dynamite.

"And the trout was caught. Alas, poor fish . . ." Is it: "and the trout was caught" or something quite else? The singer whispers the end of the song so unhappily, he murmurs himself into such a state of melancholy tenderness over his poor fish that I have never been able to make out the last words clearly. My trout was juicy but a bit fade. Trout à la Schubert.

LIFE. Put more light into the sky. Reduced the elements that were too plainly geometrical, especially in the sun. Possible in a poster, not a picture. Anxious.

The precocious spring makes one feverish. One acts hastily,

too hastily. Have painted in the whole of the first large study. It's all wrong. Let's go to Fontainebleau.

Everything is green, the buds, the mosses, the grass. The dewy air is sweet with the scent of young shoots; the obliging sky joins in and is greenish also; the wind smells of chlorophyl; youth is in me.

A sprig of moss, pointed like a star, one individual among the countless millions of its fellows. . . . Star-shaped. A force links the star to the moss. Moss: a force cast in the mould of Einstein's cosmic "folds".

The universe has points of least resistance and abhors—Pascal said so—a vacuum. So the force steps in, and a sprig of moss, a force-substance, is born, or a man. Is it then the business of Imperialist Matter to fill all vacuums? Are bodies the result of this intention? And poems too? And pictures? And ideas? And needs and desires? Last year, on the Acropolis, I was occupied with these thoughts also.

The plant world is the glorification of green. What does a painter often do on these occasions? He paints an ode to emerald and Veronese green. Which is too little and too much.

The green spring makes you want to run, to move from place to place. I often dream of caravans. The one I was living in last night was 25 yards long, like a furniture remover's van, painted in bright "English green".¹

March 21. Wakened by a beam of sunshine. To-day is officially the first day of spring. I am glad the season has arrived so punctually. I have caught myself thinking several times lately that it would be sad if the first day of spring were rainy. We like Nature to follow our plans.

A bee was waiting for me in the studio, flying, throttle full open, across the wonderfully brilliant space. Bee, messenger of spring, etc. . . . She hit the windows, as we hit the walls of our world at the end of our eye-flights, or our thoughts.

¹ *Note 1936.* If I wanted to give this dream a prophetic meaning, I might see in it the sign of my going to England. At that time I had no thought of it. In England everything that is not naturally green is painted in "English" green. I believe that the dream was merely the spring stirring up my liking for Nature and for travel.

Pretty bee, gentle bee, winged speck of life, I'll open the window for you and send you back to your boundless spaces. At least I suppose that is how you see them since you can fly for ever before you without ever coming to a boundary. What god will open the door for us that leads beyond "vain appearance", as I do, opening the transparent panes for you, brave midget? The new sun makes one "poetical" and sentimental and compassionate!

And what do I find?

That my bee is a blue-bottle from the closets. The ascendancy of speed and of light! I killed it. We like the creature of the hives because she is, like us, a social being and a geometer. The blow-fly revels in the shapeless, and we love form.

LIFE. There are spells of work when shapes seem to come of themselves, serenely, as the morning issues serenely from the placid night. At other times one must positively tear the night's fogs, shred by shred, out of one's brain. It is hard work but it often comes off. You may think me idiotic: I actually make the gesture of grasping the mists and throwing them out of the window. My subconscious is sometimes taken in.

To-day there was nothing doing, my brain was firmly jammed. So I went out in the sunshine and walked here and there about the quarter. In the rue de la Tombe-Issoire are flower-pots heaped on the open stalls of a store, pale, velvety flower-pots that caress the eye. A surface like that would suit the terra-cottas I want to bake; they would give an exquisite skin colour to the figures. The background would be enamelled in cold-distance white. There are delectable chalk-white inscriptions on the firm grey of the butchers' and green-grocers' slates:

"To-day! Best quality tripe! Large consignment of Dutch potatoes. Best meat at cut prices. Splendid opportunity! Genuine and original Italian macaroni. Eggs are cheaper. Boned veal for stews. Gravy meat. Bargain in Frankfort sausages!"

How delicious the transparent whites are, reflecting the sky's bluish pallor and the silvery spring clouds! There are many highly sensitive artists would be content merely to copy them. If I left *LIFE* where it is I would be content to do the same.

March 22. A painter has been going on at me: "Why do you write instead of painting?"

"I write in order to discover what I am. So that I can try out every possibility."

I showed him a passage that Baudelaire quotes in *Curiosités Esthétiques* by one of Delacroix's enemies: "There is no Delacroix. Monsieur Delacroix is a journalist."

Last night's dream. I was in Russia. I asked about the changes made by the Revolution. One man said to me: "Everything seems changed, but in fact everything is the same." Another said: "Everything seems the same, but in fact everything is changed."

In front of a plumber's shop a row of restaurant tables are set out. There are trays piled with sweetmeats of lead-piping, chopped into short lengths and sugared with lead oxide. The Russians kindly offer some to me. "Help yourself. Eat as much as you like." But I soon have enough of them. They are a bit heavy. The Russians urge and urge me to go on eating. Irritated, I do my best to be polite and to make my grimaces look like smiles. I thank them, my hand on my heart, so as to seem gracious and so as to try and keep myself from vomiting.

March 23. Paris is cheering Charlie Chaplin. He is lunching at the Quai d'Orsay.

For two days *LIFE* has been turned face to the wall.¹ In the first stages of a picture, not to look at it for a while is a good exercise for the brain. You go back to it presently. The shock is sometimes very painful. Habit had hidden its faults; now they jump at you. And you find that imagination, which had

¹ Note 1938. Renoir, quoted by Henri Matisse, says: "The man who, having turned his canvas to the wall for three months, does not find out what is wanting in it, need not go on painting."

been free of the image for a time, had invented virtues for it that it has not got. And then you doubt yourself. Which is what happened to me.

March 24. I have been looking at a fossil ammonite. It is of a latish stage of evolution; the Ionic simplicity of the original form has gone. Its lateral ridges check and disturb the eye, one especially, which is broken.

The monstrous is painful because it interferes with the image our minds have formed of the result, apprehended, foreseen, desired, of a sequence of functions. Say we begin to draw a spiral. In its natural course the growth of the curve would suggest young womanhood beautifully unfolding, and we look forward with delight to the lovely shape. If, instead of developing the melody as it should be developed, we "deform" it, we instantly feel distress. Directly, by a mere play of lines, without smashing of vases or virginal tears, we have provoked an affective condition of the same order. All the means of art are of this kind.

That is what so-called "deformation" is—a powerful means, an instrument of great potency. Ugliness must come from the same principle; the theme has been badly developed. . . .

Called on the tax-collector. His office is in one of the cells of the old Seminary of St. Sulpice where Renan studied for the priesthood. To get over my visit, I went to see Delacroix's pictures in St. Sulpice Church: *Jacob wrestling with the Angel*, and *Heliodorus expelling the merchants from the Temple*. The day was overcast and the light in the chapel good. In sunny weather you get all sorts of gleams. There are very few pictures whose movement is as vividly alive as these two. They seem of flame, yet they are painted in sober colours. The master was not enslaved here by the vermilions and meretricious tones, as he was in his show-pieces. The colours bind you in a spell, your heart grows warm, your spirit joyous. I linger for a long time. . . .

Modern pictures? Click, they slap you in the eye. All over. Forgotten. Most of the time the slogan is the thing in painting nowadays. The Surrealists are at least trying to get at some-

thing else. I suppose I shall again be accused of "big-subject megalomania". Micromania for little subjects is more fashionable at the moment. No compromise. I want no subject or a generous, ample subject.

LIFE. Simplified the Sun. Made the vertical lines that divide the different areas of the day oblique, giving the sun movement. Dawn's space is too small. But it is impossible to expand it at Day's expense, for then Day would be too cramped. Impossible also to reduce Night's space which is already insufficient. Which means that for the final picture I shall have to order a larger canvas. The Sun will have more room that way; it is too near the frame. At the moment the stretcher is $10\frac{3}{4} \times 7$ feet.

March 25. *LIFE*. Am still looking for tones for the Sun. Yesterday was the day of the "tuner"; to-day is a day of "excess". The thing is to find out just how far one can go and from what point one begins to make mistakes. One must know the extent of one's field and of one's legitimate rights.

I am always hoping to bring off a union of neutral and bright tones. I have tried for it all my life, but so far . . .

That a thing should be a little difficult to read at the first glance is as it should be. A slight illegibility helps to fix the attention. But for full intellectual satisfaction the strange writing must presently become clear. . . .

March 26. *LIFE*. Have repainted the figures of air in a neutral, more sustained colour. By darkening the general tone I have restored the light, which too much white was destroying. Ingres said that he wished "white cost its weight in gold". No doubt this was what he meant.

In these preliminary stages I choose and prepare the colours and one of my pupils lays them on for me. I don't look until his work is finished. In this way the eye does not get blunted and can judge sanely.

March 27. The Students' Society "Monde" have been visiting my studio. These likeable young men spend their precious Sundays learning, seeing things, asking questions. But how much do I know myself?

A small boy, one of my young cousins, asked my grandmother, at Fayet, by the proud asparagus and artichoke beds and their hedge of gooseberry bushes:

"What's a gooseberry bush, aunt?"

"It's the bush the gooseberries grow on."

"What's a gooseberry?"

"It's a fruit you make jam of."

"What's jam, aunt?"

"You know that all right. You love it anyway!"

"What's love, aunt?"

"Now you're asking too much, my boy. You'll find out."

Was the child teasing, inquisitive, or a future scientist? Between ourselves I may say that he has grown into a fool. He must have been teasing.

"But what *is* to love? *Why* do gooseberry bushes bear gooseberries?"

"Because they are gooseberry bushes," whispers Mr. But.

"Why are gooseberries called gooseberries?"

The philologists are full of information:

Gooseberry for Groose-berry (as gaffer for graffer). Grose or groise, from Middle High German *krus*, meaning curling, crisped. The fruit of the gooseberry bush. French: *groseille*. Example (by Adolphe Hatzfeld and Arsène Darmesteter, assisted by Monsieur Antoine Thomas): "*l'effort le roi me prise une grozelle*." Meaning what?

A botanist: Gooseberry bush: Small shrub of the Grossularia family.

An industrial chemist: Gooseberry: water, sugar, cellulose, acetic acid.

A market gardener: In a good year a gooseberry bush costs twenty to twenty-five francs.

April 2. Paillard-Mermoz have done a non-stop run of 5,688 miles, a record.

April 3. Have been for a stroll round Notre Dame. All those gargoyles, those ugly carved shapes on the outside of the cathedral, are satanic. Within, the darkness of the sanctuary is made darker by contrast with the veiled brilliance of the

great rose windows. Monsignor of Paris is at the altar in his purple robes. The chapter is singing the lowering and the elevating of the Host.

The body of the cathedral: the human body tempted by the devil. The chancel: the heart.

I had never noticed before that the Gothic columns interlace their rib-fingers at the crossing of the vaults. They are arms stretched towards heaven. The Greek temples produce precisely the opposite effect; their pediments draw them down close to the ground. The cathedral is a place of escape towards heaven and the unsubstantial God. The Greek temple is the office where man does his business with a living, present god. I wrote of this last year.

Strolled on to Saint-Severin. I can't see in it the Cubist air that Robert Delaunay gave it in one of his excellent canvases, painted in the heroic period. Visited St. Julien-le-Pauvre.

Reached the Louvre by way of the quays. Saw a barge called "Shower of Roses". On the Pont Neuf a delivery van drove by bearing the sign: "Vertical beds." That ought to send the architects who love the very small into ecstasies.

A woman I described my walk to was enchanted. To-day is one of the days of Tenebrae and I have been into three churches, as ordained by ancient Christian custom. She looked on it as a little miracle.

April 4. Tired. My will is slack. You may read into this the story of an artist's money and other worries. As a homœopathic measure I reread *Paludes*. In the old days I should have taken a laughing cure with Rabelais. Now he would seem too heavy for me.

April 5. Ampère the physicist wrote: "Art should be a sort of creation. . . . To have put a new type into the world, an as yet untried grouping. . . ."

Racine said:

" . . . invention consists in making something out of nothing."

And Paul Valéry writes:

“The whole work of an artist is to make something out of nothing.”

Which nevertheless shows the contrary to be true.

The *Intransigent* is printing a series of articles on “Painting, old and new”. André Malraux contributes:

“In my opinion the essential difference between the older art and modern art is that modern art, in all its most important manifestations, is increasingly opposed to the idea of permanence. The aim is to reach the beholder as immediately and violently as possible by satisfying a vulgar need, the latest and consequently the sharpest. . . .”

This is only too true. Malraux might have added that, as soon as an artist has been taken up, a second will only be chosen if he contradicts the first, whereupon the first will be set aside. The second will equally be thrown over directly he is contradicted in his turn. It is always the last contradiction that is held to be final. A work of art is judged very much less by what it gives than by what it destroys. This is indeed fashion: the thing that is loved because it changes.

Paul is accepted if he gives the lie to Peter, and James is well thought of because he is different from Peter. Which means that neither Paul nor Peter nor James are really liked. And they do not deserve to be liked since their work is most negatory. From the “teachings” of these “masters” the pupils learn one lesson, which they automatically practise: “Do the opposite.” No permanence of any kind is wanted, no development, no search extending through the years. The things of to-day become worthless to-morrow. Art consists in undoing yesterday.

And yet—by an admirable contrariness that would be a compensation if it were not equally paralysing to all evolution—every master is made to paint, all his life, the same picture. It is true that Picasso has compelled the public to

acknowledge his right to invent a new picture every day; to have done so is part of his genius. But even here you have the same phenomenon, a "sublimated fashion", as Malraux calls it. Picasso's changes are accepted because, to a superficial judgement, they *seem* to contradict each other day by day. This is the time of pirouettes. The art of the moment is an art created by and for the weak, the neurotic, the worn-out men of the Roman or Byzantine decadences, or of our own day of drugs and necking parties. Fortunately everybody is not in need of the hot-and-cold douche régime. Some day a great, vigorous artist will say, as the great Poussin said: "These are not pictures such as your Paris painters toss off, whistling, in twenty-four hours."

April 6. Feast-day of St. Prudence. I had turned *LIFE* to the wall, being displeased with it. I have had a look at it and am not pleased with it. And have turned its face to the wall again.

April 7. Studies for the background of *Maternity*. This is an experimental picture in which I am able to work at the purely technical and material problems that my big picture will presently set me.

April 9. Last night, in the company of Fernand Divoire of the Paris Observatoire, we saw Jupiter in his natural state. The astronomer Cassini wrote:

"The men who observe Venus should follow the advice that Laplace gave in a remarkable passage: 'It is highly important, where the visual impressions are so slight, to guard against the workings of the imagination. For the inner pictures that imagination creates can have considerable influence; they often modify and transform the true pictures created by the sight of an object.'"

The same text could be used equally well in criticising works of art that are not sufficiently forceful, that weakly allow the spectator to "collaborate".

The trouble, the fundamental misunderstanding between

the artist and most of the public is that the artist wants the spectator to submit himself to the work, to be its slave, to obey its will. While the spectator, on his side, wants to treat the work as his servant, to look at it the way he pleases, to find in it what he likes. People usually hate decisive, commanding works for this reason. Yesterday someone said to me, looking at my big study for *LIFE*: "Leave it like that. It is full of suggestion." I know that everything I do henceforth on my canvas will lose me a hundred "friends". But will gain me one whom I shall value.

April 10. A woman says to me: "The stars are the souls of the dead." Again, this is rationalising. Giving an explanation of the mysterious. All religious and poetical folklore does the same. We take our attempts at comprehension for mystic flights. See Pascal.

April 12. Bronchitis. Good for nothing. Went to the fort of Montrouge. The entire Sunday crowd, from babies in arms to the aged and decrepit, even the dogs, are playing with round objects: rattles, woolly balls, marbles, bowls, large balls, balloons. It seems that Sunday was invented as the apotheosis of the spherical. Sunday is a round day. The other days of the week are all alike; they are the string that holds the captive balloon of Sunday. If the week has been a bad one, Sunday is a hard, threatening ball jumping out of its cup. The industry that manufactures balls is a flourishing industry.

The light is commonplace. A mother is sitting, keeping an eye on her daughter, who, of course, is playing ball. It is always held to be the decent, proper thing for mothers to play their mothers' part ostentatiously to the gallery. Every moment or two this one shouts orders to her child, ending invariably with "D'you hear, Lulu?" You can see from the dignified, majestic air mothers put on pushing perambulators that they look upon themselves as heroines. Yet how many children are less the children of love than of laziness, or weariness, or sleep?

A herd of goats goes by with a man that must be called a goat-herd in spite of his bowler hat. He is playing the mouth-

organ. Five hundred men, women and children gather round and stare at the herd as though it were a procession of strange beasts from strange lands. The Montrouge Parisians drink the foaming goats' milk with as much wonder as they drink the milk of coconuts at a fair. The simple thing is exotic here, as a perambulator would seem exotic in the desert, or a sardine-tin among camels. Sunday itself is always an exotic sort of day, unusual, abnormal.

Rereading what I have written, the word Sunday jumps out at me. I can see nothing else. It gets bigger and bigger:

SUNDAY

Odd. I spell it out: S.U.N: SUN. D.A.Y: DAY. SUNDAY. It is really very funny. Have I made a mistake? I look again. Sun-day, Sun-day, Sun-day, Sun-day, Sun-day. . . . It might be Chinese. To think that *Sontag* and *Domingos* seemed strange at first. . . . Sunday. Have I spelt it wrong? Sunday, Sunday. . . . It is enough to send you mad. Sunday. Am I going mad? I ask Marthe how Sunday is spelt. Language is a funny thing.

When I was a child I used to amuse myself saying the same word over and over again. Button, for instance—buttonbuttonbuttonbuttonbutton. It made me feel giddy and then everything became strange. . . . That is why I have never wanted alcohol or drugs. No doubt I was born a little mad.

A propos of this: one would suppose that a small child would go into ecstasies at the sight of every new thing. Certain psychologists have in fact claimed that the obscure memory of these alleged ecstasies are the true origin of the lyric impulse and that the action of poetry is to reawaken them. It is quite possible. So far as I am concerned I have lost all memory of my first contacts with reality and can find no trace of wonder until I was fully conscious of what I saw.¹ Astonishment was born and grew in me with age, and it is now that

¹ I refer here to babies. The amazement and delight I spoke of in Part I are those of a child of say three to fifteen.

the universe appears utterly mysterious. My first surprise were the luminous fountains of the 1889 Exhibition. They are my earliest memory; I was three years old. Perhaps it is that, although we forget our first amazements, their obscure effects nevertheless linger? I am always ready to accept a hypothesis. It is a good thing to make assumptions so long as one does not believe in any that are unproven.

What I am quite sure of is that even children want manufactured mysteries. Poetry in fact. Would they want them if the gradual discovery of Nature were sufficient? When I was a child a big fair used to come every October to the square in front of the Police Barracks. For months beforehand I dreamed—no, I thought quite definitely—of the miracles that were about to be performed within the tent of the Potel Fairy-Theatre. It was a Drury Lane in miniature, with its trick scenery, its trap-doors and transformation scenes, its bogus sorceries, its blue and violet Bengal lights beloved of the fairies. I was quite aware that the fairies were Monsieur Potel's daughters; you could see them every evening, washing their clothes in a tub beside the caravan. I knew, therefore, perfectly clearly, that what happened in the tent was a series of illusions. Yet year after year I wanted to see the show, not once but many times. The grown man's pleasure in "reliving" his pleasures was already there. But what I see most plainly in this childish memory is that the child—the sort of child, at all events, that I was—had a need of conscious illusion, that is: of art.

Nowadays I have no need of Monsieur Potel. When I look at myself in the shaving mirror every morning, eye to eye—that is mystery. I have to pinch myself to make sure I am there. To men the mysterious is everywhere except at the pantomime.

April 13. Visit from Raymond Cogniat. He observes that in the last years I have been busy looking for "plastic terms", and that, now, I paint with these terms quite freely. I pointed out to him that to write well one must only use the words one is accustomed to handle. At the beginning of his career

the artist must find out about himself, must analyse his thoughts, his needs, his feelings in order to try and discover what he is. He must observe the outside world in order to discover the means of expressing himself most exactly. He must experiment scrupulously in forms and colours and the effect they have on him, and he must also make sure of the effect that the "words" of his vocabulary have upon others. When he has ascertained that the said "words" act as they should, he can begin to construct sentences. These, also, must be tested; it is a twenty-year novitiate. When he has made all his discoveries he will be able to shape them into whole works: poems, prose-writings, operas, symphonies, fugues, novels, architectural plans, pictures, philosophies. I am only just beginning to paint.

Or else paint as the spirit moves you and you will be a genius from eight to fourteen.

April 14. *LIFE*. Progress is difficult. There is a terrible inertia about a thing done. The tentative soon takes on a final air. Danger of the accomplished facts. I . . . have said so before, but it can't be said too often. . . .

The *Intransigent* prints, in very small type, without any commentary, in a corner of the paper, this really very sensational piece of news:

"*Madrid, April 14.* It is reported that the Republic has been proclaimed in Saragossa, Cordova, St. Sebastian, Huelva, Almeria, Vigo, Leon and in other small towns. (Havas)."

I switch on Barcelona on the wireless. A fox-trot. The *Intransigent's* must be a false report. Surely it is. Here are advertisements: "*Coñac Garbel. El mejor. Rambla de Cataluña. Calidad!*"

I must find out definitely. I go on to Madrid. Catalanian Sardanas. Yet the programme given in the wireless papers is not being followed. But that often happens. At thirteen minutes to ten, after a Seguedilla by Albeniz, Madrid speaks, and I

seem to make out: "*Señores. Señoras. . . .* great manifestation of the people of Spain . . . constructive. Second Spanish Republic." Then hymns that do not sound like gramophone records. Then "*. . . El mejor tabacco por caballeros.*" Ten o'clock strikes at the *Gobernacion*. A record of Raquel Meller. So what?

I go back to Barcelona. They are giving a lecture or a speech in Catalan. There is a noise of heavy footsteps, a stirring in the auditorium, the microphone hums and resounds and you hear: "*Casa del pueblo de Madrid . . .* proclaimed the republic in Madrid." An old *Cante jondo* follows, after which the speaker, who is a ventriloquist—do people know that?—starts on an advertising broadcast. He imitates a motor-horn: "Honk! Honk! Honk! Vans! Federal vans! the fastest! Federal vans. Fe-de-ral. Federal vans! *Señores, Señoras . . .*"

A long silence, and suddenly an uproar. A loud voice says in French: "*Messieurs nos voisins les Français.* The King and the royal family have gone. Order reigns in Barcelona. The Republic has been proclaimed. (Here follow the names of the Republican Government, which I was unable to take down.) The police and the troops are fraternising with the revolutionaries of Catalonia's provisional republic. The officers are tearing off the insignia of royalty."

I try Madrid again. "Circular 52 of the provisional Government. *Salut à Macia!* The Republic is proclaimed!" (emphatically)¹

April 15. The papers inform us that it was M. Alcala Zamora, the president of the provisional Republican Government who was speaking on the Wireless last night.

My birthday. On the *boulevards extérieurs* I met a steam-roller that is exactly my age and the age of Alphonse XIII, having been made in Rochester in 1886. It was a very well-preserved steam-roller and was doing its steam-roller's job excellently. Alphonse has finished his. In 1886 Seurat painted

¹ *Note 1936.* This refers to the first Spanish republican revolution, the revolution of which Mr. Azaña said recently that it was made with all the jewellers' shops open. One may note also that throughout Franco's siege Madrid continued to broadcast advertisements.

La Grande Jatte and Cézanne the *Sainte Victoire* that is in the Harriman Collection in New York.

Forty-five years to-day. The light that left the polar star on the day of my birth is the light that reveals it to us to-day.

It is time to get on with the preparations for my half-century. Have decided to give up cigarettes. The decision is a blessing conferred by the Spanish Republic. It kept me listening half the night and smoking so much that I have had a sickener and refuse to smoke any more. Am extremely nervy. I might, like Cocteau, write the story of my disintoxication. . . .

April 19. Summer time starts. It is snowing. Most improper. Life has no flavour. Absence of tobacco. . . .

Saw a bed of artificial flowers in the courtyard of a decorator. As repulsive as having a wax woman as a mistress.

April 20. Went to the rue de la Boétie. The Prince of Sweden, the painter, in a very smart blue suit and suède gloves, was just coming out of his exhibition at Paul Rosenberg's as I went in. He paints landscapes as people used to paint them, very agreeably.

Toulouse-Lautrec Exhibition at the Pavillon de Marsan. A lot of old dotards drag themselves and their keepers and their old pox round the walls, finding immense pleasure in getting back to the pictures of their "good times", to their ex-gay world. Did the expensive women of those days really look like that? *At the Moulin Rouge* (Arts Institute, Chicago) is the best picture. Caricatures do not survive the thing caricatured.

April 22. A young woman brings me a huge quantity of sketches and sketchlets. She wants, she says, my opinion of them. That is: praise.

"I did them in five minutes," says she when I tell her they are not bad.

And when I tell her they are not very good, she says: "I did them in five minutes." She expects me to be astonished at the swiftness of her eye, the speed of her hand, "the cleverness of her pencil". In fact that is right enough: her pencil is clever. I congratulate it. She thinks the compliment is meant for her. She has been going to an academy every after-

noon for some years and has "done" ten or twenty sketches a day. You would suppose she was paid by the piece. I read her the following passage from Diderot, out of the *Encyclopaedia*:

"Be assured that nothing is more harmful to your budding talents than to make too great a habit of sketching. Sketches accustom you to inaccuracies of drawing and to a dislike of finishing your work. And since imagination will always supply what is lacking, it happens presently that faults are called beauties."

The young woman asks: "Who's Diderot?" On learning that he is dead, she smiles, knowing, of course, that the old artists talked nothing but bosh and that the young ones, fortunately, have put all that right.

This sketching disease is a direct inheritance from Impressionism, which had inherited it from the Naturalist mania. Nothing could be painted without the personal supervision of the model—woman, tree, apple, pear, lemon. The writers of the period sketched facts and skewered them, raw and bleeding.

When I began, round about 1900, I had read great praise of the Impressionists, those bold spirits who were so extravagantly applauded for their desertion of the studio and its "northlight", its cold, shameful, evil north light. I felt powerless, my mind was a blank if things did not pose for me; indeed I felt positively guilty if, in the absence of the model, I dared make the slightest change in a design or a colour. And please observe that, as often as not, the model's rule was in fact purely honorary, no more than a kindly chaperoning that left me to my imagination. How silly it was! We were all very shocked to hear that Cézanne used artificial flowers for his still-lives. Times have changed, and now I believe people would be shocked to see a painter paint real flowers.

Actually I paint almost entirely, now, out of my imagination and a sum, a synthesis of memories. I go on observing, of course, constantly, but I do not use what I see directly, immediately. Shapes and colours are accurately registered

and are at once called up when their services are required. In the same way a violinist automatically places his fingertip on the note he has in mind, and the word comes of itself at the bidding of a clear thought.

April 23. Muff is a sportsman; every day he goes after his mouse. Not out of hunger—he stuffs himself with food in the kitchen—but for the sake of the sport, of honour and perhaps to give himself the illusion that he is earning an honest living. He purrs in front of the radiator, proud and delighted, his trophy by his side. Muffet, too, loves glory. But she is cleverer than Muff; she does not go after it, she finds it. She abstracts the mouse from the sleeping Muff and brings it to me, rubbing herself against my leg to show me what a smart, brave, precious, admirable cat she is. Having brought off her effect and got her stroking, she goes back, pleased as Punch, and surreptitiously restores the mouse to its lawful owner.

A lot of artists borrow, but few give back.

I live in a quiet neighbourhood. From time to time a loud, dull report silences the birds. It comes from Montparnasse. It is a poet, a painter, a musician who was too full of himself, bursting. And quite often he was only full of others.

April 24. A trace of migraine. These headaches are becoming a bore. "Rest," says the doctor. Since 1914, except for two of three summer holidays, one or two tours in the car, during the rich years, and the unforgettable cruise, I have hardly ceased working feverishly from morning till night. The thought of time passing genuinely frightens me. Good work takes such a long time in our profession. Renoir spent three years on his *Baigneuse Tyson*.

What has happened to me this morning? Here I am taking a stroll quite aimlessly, without a job of work to be done, without an "excuse". I am not in the habit of giving myself a "lazy time", like this. For a good hour, in the Parc Montsouris, I looked at the grass. It seemed to me that I could see it grow. My virginia creeper grows nearly half an inch in the twenty-four hours. The day is of tender spring sunshine; the shadows of the little clouds run lightly over the

lawns. In the places where the grass has been mown, daisies are already growing. It looks as though the scythe had spared them scrupulously one by one.

I wrote this sitting on a bench. It has a tired air. What I want is a bit of sheer silliness. I confess I sometimes like talking nonsense and hearing people talk nonsense. Logomachia—an excellent relaxation. To set down just anything that comes into my mind rests me, for if I rest and do nothing I think about my work, I fall back into my worries, etc. . . .

“The Murmurs of the Forest.” It sounds well in English or in German. But I am writing in French. . . .

Forest. . . . Slow battle of the wind’s patience and the suppleness of fibres. The birch affects to yield, bows politely, and the wind misses its stroke. The oak, noble and obstinate as a knight in an ancient verse-chronicle, says that he is the King, that he is to the trees what the lion is to the beasts, that he inherits his royalty from the paternal acorn, who inherited it from a whole line of Magdalenian, Germanic, Frank, Mongol, that is to say French acorns. During the speech the druid-wind tears from the oak a branch or two. The sovereign tree appeals to the Holy Mistletoe of its Court, who bears witness in His Majesty’s favour, like the good parasite it is. The pig people, God’s scavengers, guzzle at the foot of the trunk, and the oak takes them for his adoring subjects crying “Long live the King!” The King of Spain, like many other monarchs who have lost their thrones, fancied that he was much beloved. The beeches prefer to live beside alleys. They shelter one behind the other, like heads of departments in shops at sale time. The little people of the forest, the bushes, the copses, the small fry, spend their time gossiping with the laggard eddies of the wind that whisper—quick, quick—of what they saw, say, in America, grand tales of gangsters or of film stars. And the grasses? They seem impersonal there are so many of them, and very discreet, silent or nearly silent. Grass is neither very big nor very small; it has neither the glamour of the telescopic nor of the microscopical. You walk on it. It is frail, fragile, fleeting. It is of no

direct use to anyone. You can't make houses of it. Or burn it at all pleasantly. If you do, its smoke smells evilly and makes your eyes water. Grass is no good except to purge dogs and cats and to give cows milk. Yet nothing has more effect on me than a fine lawn. If you listen you can hear the music of atoms, which is, in very small, that same music of the spheres that the world heard when it was musical, Keplerian. In this huge swarm of individuals, also, I can feel the unanimous, germinating forces of the spring. And it is in the spring that Nature is most kind to us, most intimate and friendly, for it is in the spring that we feel, swarming within us, the vigorous pressure of the lives of which we are made. Now I know why I went out. I wanted to nibble grass like a cat in spring-time. . . .

April 28. I thought that the bean, sown in the little pot on my work-table, was rotten. And now I see it thrusting its testicle shape upward, full of potential strength, lifting the earth.

Correcting some of the outlines of *LIFE*, I am helped by those of the Archduke Trio.

April 29. The plastic clay with which I have modelled a group—"Love," to be cast in bronze—instead of being the good firm green I am usually supplied with, is weakly purplish. It gives the plasticine shape a blurred, hazy look, as though it had no solidity. In reality it is firm and clear-cut. I attempted to explain, in *Art*, by what workings of the laws of vision certain colours can be destructive.¹

As the first rays of the sun break through, plaintive Nature seems to sigh: "Why must he wake me, the tiresome fellow? I was having such a good sleep." She has been snoozing for nearly a year. "The more I sleep the sleepier I am," she yawns, stretching arms that are still half leafless. Lazy May! The weather is damp. Great shivers run down the back of the green lawn; it bristles like a hedgehog. The farmyard cocks let it be known that they are happy. That is all very well. There is no Crisis where you are.

¹ *Art*, p. 240. "False" tones.

Note 1937. The researches of Dr. Polack on Chromatism seem to justify what I said.

"Why paint with such difficulty? Why write? Oh b . . .!" I say to myself.

In the reign of Philippe-Auguste there were eleven famines; the earth's yield was insufficient. Now there is a famine in the country places of America because the earth is yielding too much. To-day, where there is no Money, there is individual starvation, which is the most atrocious form of famine. Too many workers! It's only your money we want! In the good old-fashioned classic famine the survivor could at least eat the dead. It is said, by the way, that the Chinese, the oldest of civilised peoples, are reviving the tradition. It is horrible, for in fact mountains of food exist for which there are no buyers: there are too many poor. As for those who are rich in the things of this world, they "wisely" do not give, even where they have a surfeit, for that would spoil their markets. In order to go on making money they must go on selling, and if they give you do not buy. Talk of the shamefully vicious! This is a vicious circle indeed.

How can one help doubting everything? We were brought up on the idea that production meant wealth, and we have known the War years and the years that followed the War when the name of Virtue was Production. It was said: "He is rather stupid but he produces." "So and So is a confounded scamp but he is a great producer." The absolution of every sin was: "He is a useful man, he helps the nation." Now it appears that the world's ruin is the result of over-production. I know nothing more demoralising than to realise that a principle that has been vital should thus be shown as bankrupt. Nowadays to hear someone sing the praises of a Great Producer sounds a little quaint, a little silly, almost dishonest, almost dangerous, altogether out of date.

April 30. Flu. Blues. As a counter-irritant, read right through, with the utmost care, George Prade's *Le Républicain du XIV^{ème}*. Now I know all about mosaic pavements. I don't want to speak of my financial troubles. I am not very sensitive to money, but to go in constant fear of having to give up one's workshop—that is, for an artist, one's air, one's happi-

ness—ends by producing a melancholy that is often difficult to sweep away. And does not help one to concentrate on work. There are days when *LIFE* seems to me quite useless. Having always been thought rich without ever having been it; I have always suffered from the inconveniences of wealth—jealousies, envies. And I have never enjoyed the advantages of poverty. I am rather glad to be going to Germany presently. It will freshen up my brain. Yet at heart I am a stay-at-home bird; I hate leaving anything. And so, once I have gone, I hate coming back, since that is also leaving.

May 3. Off to Germany to-morrow. I am tidying up so as to find everything in good order when I get back. I can only work when things are in their proper places. Or else on my knee, in the midst of Nature's disorder. But no half measures: Roneo files or soap boxes. At the moment I am going soap-boxward.

May 4. On the way to Germany. The valley of the Marne, ancient, Romanesque France, where such generous massacres went on between 1914 and 1918. Pink-tiled villages, in the manner of La Fontaine's Fables. Here is Château-Thierry. Here is Epernay where the wine comes from, the strong wine that makes you gay, and where a woman was born who makes me strong with her courage and her gaiety. Not far off is Mourmelon, where we both went, she and I, in the years before we had met, when we were still looking for each other, to see the Wright brothers' aeroplane, and Bleriot fluttering and dipping into the haystacks, and others who did not fly at all.

Here are the hills that struck me so forcibly in those days. They rise suddenly out of the vast, platitudinous plains of Champagne. The vines' green squares and diamonds and the red chequer-board of the ploughed earth give them a Harlequin dress. Going home to St. Quentin from Mourmelon I made a note of the scheme from memory. It was the first picture I painted without the "model" in front of me, and the first that had a geometric element.

Polish churches lord it over Lorraine. One of them springs up like a giant in the centre of a little low-built market town.

The height of the place is much greater than its breadth. The huddled houses are about the church like sucking puppies about a bitch.

In the carriage with me is an American journalist, a Jew of Russian origin. He is going to the land of the Soviets "to see how the mystic nature of the Russian fits into the materialistic Communist scheme". (Some days later, in Berlin, Brodowsky, a revolutionary of the Lenin days, now a diplomat, answered the question: "The Russians fit into the materialist scheme perfectly, which is a proof that they were not mystics." I would sooner believe that the Communists have found the art of substituting an active, collective mysticism for the passive individualistic mysticism of which the Russians were dying.)

Stuttgart. Lectured on the need, in art and elsewhere, of a new ethic based on a sense of responsibility to society. A warm, courteous, friendly audience. Some of the newspapers praised me for being a European. Others saw in this European spirit an attack on German nationalism and the sign of a dangerous internationalism on my part. Others again displayed that respect for ideas which distinguishes the German intellectuals, especially those of the South and of Berlin Jewish society.

May 7. Left Berlin in the morning. Near Wurzburg are great fields, empty, without horizon, beneath trailing grey clouds. Alone in the plain an old man and a tiny child go hand in hand. You can see that the little one's idea is to protect his aged companion. They each carry a branch of flowering blossoms. The *lied* moved me deeply. Tiredness makes one sensitive. Or rather, no. The rough times we live in try the heart, batter it, harden it; weariness softens the calluses.

At Ditzhausen, in Thuringa, a man is sowing corn. The seed sprays out of his hand like steam.

Merseburg. A ghastly manufactory of ammoniacal products and probably of war gases. A monstrous place; the train never seems to see the end of it. Unhappy and dangerous land; dangerous because unhappy. . . .

The weather is cool. We are three in the carriage. A young

man and a young girl sit opposite each other. At Stuttgart, where they got in, they did not know each other.

"Excuse me. Will the air be too cold for you?"

"Not at all, not at all. Please open the window. I like fresh air. It's healthy."

The young man puts the window right down. To show what an obliging, gallant fellow he is, he closes it just a little bit.

"You can open it wide if you like."

So the window is left wide open. Their common passion for fresh air and cinders keeps them chattering very warmly. At Weimar they are sitting side by side, sharing their lunch-parcels and partaking of the sacrament of little sausages. On arrival the young woman shivered and sneezed and her face was black with smuts. But the fresh-air theory had been vindicated.¹ Discovering that they lived in the same street in Berlin, they went off together.

I have been thinking over experiments that I saw while I was at Stuttgart at the house of Regener, the famous physicist, one of the masters of the atom. In the past years certain prodigiously rapid radiations have been observed, the fastest yet known, hence the "hardest" and for this reason fabulously powerful. They can pass directly through a thickness of six and a half metres of lead. They go through our bodies at an average of twenty a minute. Regener puts forward, diffidently, the suggestion that these "cosmic rays", these tiny meteors, were sent out under conditions of heat other than those of our present universe, since the temperature needed for their generation is 10^{10} and the average temperature of the sun is 6,000 degrees. He is therefore led to infer that the radiations were, in fact, generated at an earlier stage of the universe, when great conditions of heat obtained, and that, having followed an Einsteinian curve round the world—an immensity of time and distance—they are merely returning to us.²

¹ *Note 1937.* England is ravaged by the sentimental doctrine of Fresh Air—universal, chronic colds in the head.

² M. Dixon is speculating on the possibility of the cosmic rays being agents in the mutation of living species, the astral bombardment transforming the chromosomes.

To the ancients all things were gods; to the men of the Middle Ages, indeed as to many simple folk to-day, the world was peopled with Spirits. Science chased away the fairies; the real appeared "normal" to us. Then the instruments of magnification showed us our "real" in new and ever more fantastic aspects. Yesterday I saw a particle of living matter in the mists of the Wilson radiating apparatus and it was behaving like the rose of a watering-can that could spout ions. It is foreseen that further instruments will soon show us Nature in yet other and stranger forms.

I can't help wondering if we shall not talk someday of "grains" of time, as we talk now of grains of electricity, the quanta in relation to time. The Time Quanta would be the smallest particle of time capable of containing a minimum of reality.

In a no-man's-land at Bitterfeld are five old, disused, iron wind-mills. The first is still nearly complete, but the ends of the ancient sails hang down sadly. The second has only three sails left; the third has only two; the fourth, one, and the fifth none at all. Electricity, gas, radiation. . . .

May 10. Berlin. At the new museums are restorations of the Pergamus Altar, the Gate of the Miletus Market and a reconstruction of the Way of the Processions of Babylon. Monumental stones, huge weights brought from the East. The plan was instigated in the 19th century by Messel; Wiegand carried it out finally in spite of considerable material difficulties and in face of much opposition in the Press. It was said the cost would be too great. (But they would have used the money to manufacture gases.) The result is magnificent. If there are mistakes, the mistakes themselves have grandeur. Are there enough errors of this kind committed in the world to-day?¹

I had a narrow escape at my lecture last night. In the front

¹ *Note 1931.* "On the 28th September, Monsieur Laval visited the rooms that are given over to the restored Pergamus and Babylon monuments. M. Laval, accompanied by Messrs. Brüning and Curtius, was full of admiration. Messrs. Berthelot, Léger and François-Poncet followed them. M. Briand, who is a little tired, stayed at his hotel but will be joining them presently at the official luncheon" (*Le Journal*).

row of the audience was a certain lady armed with a field-telephone and flashing eyes. Clever, deaf and not at all kindly disposed. It seems that she goes everywhere with her ear-piece dangling by her cheek; when you speak she holds the microphone up to your mouth like a paten. Most disturbing. Before the lecture she put her mike in front of me and unwound the flex as far as her seat. I had a double impression of talking on the wireless and privately for her. I am told that when the lecture does not please her, she unhooks her telephone and shuts it with a smart click, thus informing the audience that the discourse is not worth hearing. The lecturer mops his brow and splutters; it happened to G . . . the other day. She did not do so last night.

May 12. Just back from the Bauhaus of Dessau where I was lecturing. I said, among other things:

“To man, as well as to the slug, God gave no shell. The engineer-architect came and made shells for man.

The Architect: How happy you must be, Client, now that I have given you a shell!

The Client: I have discovered the happiness of the snail.

The Architect: All the needs of man are functional. The house I have built for you fulfils these needs. What more do you want?

The Client: I should like to discover the happiness of architecture.

The Architect: Haven't you got a handy wash-basin? An electric kitchen? A hygienic dustbin? A bidet in the best style? And a W.C. with central heating, a pneumatic flush, a scented atomiser and an automatic cleaner?

The Client: Mr. Engineer, you talk like my wash-basin which is 'hoch modern'. My china wash-basin is a little conceited but it is convenient. It goes gurgle-gurgle, and I understand its speech. I always shave directly I get up in the morning. It is especially at that hour that I like my familiar washstand's talk—one really feels very lonely then, coming out of the night's death. It often says to me: 'You seem tragic this morning, but look at me, your faithful wash-basin, I am

with you helping you heart and soul, functioning perfectly. Am I not beauty personified?' Whereupon I shut its clapper. My elegant and up-to-date flush is more eloquent still and holds forth impetuously and passionately on the supreme beauty of all functioning. Do not architects themselves constantly tell us these days that art exists only in usefulness?"

No doubt art is useful. It would not exist otherwise. But surely it is right to distinguish between the usefulness of a water-closet and the usefulness of a fugue? I have the feeling that in Germany nowadays the distinction is not too clearly drawn. Man is not all guts and belly.

Went to see Kandinsky and Klee, two real artists. Both are professors at the Bauhaus. Klee's grandmother was French. Kandinsky is a Russian by birth.¹

In Klee's garden the child and the little cat both cry out in French, a tongue that seems to be as universal as cries and onomatopoeias!

Visit to the textile section of the Bauhaus. Rolls of material are spread out for me. I look at them and make the polite little clucking noises that one makes before works of art that are not very exciting. But my guide unrolls a flecked tissue and puts an end to my clucking. For one cannot cluck and breathe deeply, and now I am breathing as though I had been borne to a great height, above mountains and glaciers, up into the night sky. I gaze in silence at the stuff that the kindly employee is holding out for me. Seeing me stand there quite still and no longer clucking, he appears anxious. I fancy he thinks I am asleep. But I am floating in the spaces of the night; stars and asteroids go past, fire-balls fly across the web, straight to the selvage. From the infinite I am transported suddenly to a microscopic world; the flecks of the tissue have a phosphorescent look and seem to spring from radium. The stuff is dark, scattered over with lights and nebulae; frail shining threads run through it that are like the trajectories

¹ *Note 1935.* Gropius is now working in London, the Bauhaus having been closed down by the Nazis.

Note 1936. Kandinsky is living in Paris. Klee in Switzerland.

Note 1937. Gropius is now professor at Harvard University.

of meteors. The painter's eye knows that a thread of real metal, being a material reality, cannot lead to as strong and delicate a truth as a grey thread properly set and properly surrounded. The well-placed and well-proportioned accents of this stuff carry one irresistibly to some sort of Milky Way; a photograph of the heavens could never do it so well. Effective power of illusion. . . .

From this little episode other deductions might be made concerning art, but I think they have been implied.

German Expressionism is untiring. I can never see a picture of this school without smiling. The first office of the *Esprit Nouveau*, in 1921, was a little room in the rue de Seine. As the review prospered and we wanted a waiting-room, we rented the hall of the next-door flat. The old lady to whom it belonged had decorated it with an enormous reproduction of that famous 1870 war picture, *Dernière Cartouche*, by Alphonse de Neuville. We had no right to shift anything in the hall as it became the old lady's again after office hours.

One day Hervart Walden, the great impresario of Expressionism, came to us from Germany. He unpacked a number of water-colours that his gallery and his review *Sturm* were launching. They were pleasant or unpleasant splashings of bright colours. As it happened, on the mantel-piece, behind the *Dernière Cartouche*, was the pastel original of the "Chromatic Circle" that the scientist Charles Henry had made and that we were going to reproduce in the paper. Wishing to make Walden understand that the pictures he was showing me had great charm but not more so than the solar spectrum, I pointed to the Chromatic Circle. As quick as a Jack-in-the-box, Walden bundled his Expressionist pictures higgledy-piggledy into his portfolio, tossed his silvered Wagnerian locks and, without a word, opened the door and ran downstairs as fast as his dignity would let him. I did not realise till later that he had entirely misunderstood my gesture. He had taken it to mean that I preferred the war picture to his Expressionisms. Or perhaps he thought that a "victor" of 1918 was intending to insult a victor of 1870 and felt hurt about that. . . .

French art finds buyers in Germany but German art is scarcely bought in France. This apparent anomaly is the astonishment and the despair of German artists. They accuse us of having a narrowly nationalist spirit. I suggest that the circumstance has various causes.

(1) When a German is worried he likes to go to the cemetery; the Frenchman goes to the movies. The Frenchman is allopathic, he looks for a remedy in contraries; the German is homœopathic and looks for a remedy in similarities. If a German has the toothache he will give himself a violent blow on the jaw so as to forget his pain in a greater pain. (Which explains their constant use of the catastrophic in politics.) We prefer to take an aspirin. Germany sends us aspirins and we send her our picture-medicines, our novels, our films. The German and the Slav, find relief in drama (sometimes other people's drama) and their art is dramatic, romantic. We like work that is serene and soothing. German painting is a drug that cures only the German; ours is generally efficacious. It is pleasanter to be caressed than to be beaten.

(2) Why are there few good painters among the great lyrical nations, the Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Russians, Scandinavians? The more a people is naturally poetic the more art it projects on to outside objects, hence on to works of art. In this way it runs the risk of not feeling what it sees directly; the spectator puts too much of himself into the work of art.

For these peoples, a work of art is not a force to which one must submit, it is a starting-point for their own creations. The weakest spring-board is enough for this kind of man; the poorest of sketches is sufficient instantly to set free their abundant, ever-present lyricism. The work of art can only leave them to it; they dream before it without seeing it; they may even turn away so that it should not hinder their flight. It does no more than release the spring.

Southern people are more objective, the outside world exists vividly for them. They are less poetic, less imaginative, less able to "collaborate" with works of art. They accept them somewhat passively. And so they need an imperative

objective form of art. For this reason the art of the South has a more universal quality.

Great painters are often found at the junction of the two nationalities. In men whose nature partakes of both types you find a lyricism that colours "reality" and realistic gifts that make poetry objective. This is the case with the Rhineland, that mixture of Roman objectivity and German subjectivity. See its admirable primitives, Grunewald, etc.

Even when he writes, speaks, thinks, reads, listens, the German is less anxious than the Frenchman to find out what it is really all about.

May 14. Berlin is deeply depressed this morning. Germany was counting on Briand the European being elected to the Presidency of the Republic, and it is Doumer who has been put on the throne. Saw "The Million" by René Clair. They are giving it here for the first time. A charming picture. Great success. All these Germans, crushed this morning by their misfortune, this evening were forced (imperative art) to laugh. They came out of the cinema rocking with amusement. An additional proof of the excellence of our therapeutics and of what I said just now.

Having a card for the Varnishing day of Jean Lurçat's exhibition I went to the Flechtheim gallery, not far from Nierendorf's where my own show is on. My friend was there with the famous Paris picture dealer Bigniou. His painting, which seemed aggressive in Paris, is gentle and charming here. Everything of Berlin in Prussia is violent and extreme.

May 15. M. . . . the painter, offered to take us by road to Bremen: "But we won't go very fast. I am running-in the car." I was delighted. I like to go fast when I am driving myself but I am terrified of other people's speed. We started out by Potsdam. The day was fine. Every now and then Nierendorf let out a cheerful: "Tiei-Um! Pum pum!"

At Brandenburg, wanting to visit an interesting old church, we stopped and asked the way of a fat, comfortable-looking gentleman who was on the road. He insisted on directing us personally to his church, being, as it seemed, the choir-master.

The car, officially a three-seater, already held three of us; we had some difficulty in fitting in the good bourgeois of Brandenburg, the more so that his pockets were full of fresh eggs. However, we got through the perilous journey safely, and were very glad of it, for our choir-master showed us a Medieval tapestry that was truly magnificent. The highly contrasted colours have remained extraordinarily bright, revealing the bold freshness that was in our ancient forefathers and that the French museums persist in keeping hidden under grime—the respected patina of the ages, they call it.

Setting *LIFE*, in my mind's eye, side by side with the tapestry, the chromatics of my picture seem too complex and too flat. What I shall go through when I get back. . . .

Going through Brunswick, the driver and my friend seized hungrily upon the daily papers. In Germany—as in France during the War—people devour the newspapers hot. They are constantly hoping for “something” to happen that will magically restore German prosperity. I am terribly sorry for them. For nearly sixteen years Europe had been bullying them out of revenge and in fear of their recovery.

The motor was getting hot. Every now and then we stopped while I gave the carburettor a sniff of oil. We dragged on to the little market-town of Erxleben. An old German inn, built in the days of Johann Sebastian Bach, invited us to sleep within its kindly walls. I had never seen a stork before. The long-necked birds, perched on their stilts of legs, are at once absurd and touching, homely. They have a Phoenix look, too, sitting on the chimney in their faggot nest, with the smoke of the fire mythologically curling about them.

More newspapers. Toscanini has been wounded by a Fascist, yesterday at Bologna, for refusing to play the Party hymn at one of his concerts.¹

We were eating our dinner and laughing a lot when the door opened noisily and a gigantic individual burst in. He was plainly in a very excited state. Rolling his huge eyes, he seized

¹ In 1938 Toscanini, constantly harried by the Fascists, was naturalised American.

one of my companions by the arm and pointed at me: "Jews should not be allowed in Germany! They have no country! They are breaking up Europe!"¹

My companions had the greatest possible trouble in convincing him I was only a Frenchman and had been born a Catholic. The National-Socialist calmed down a little and said that that "was on the whole better". He made peace by turning his large back on me—so as not to see my still-suspect nose—and began to drink heavily.

Next morning we started early in the gay, lovely weather, among the flowering apple trees. A number of vans went by, packed with men standing upright and shouting and gesticulating. Hitlerites going to some meeting. It was a Sunday.

May 17. Painting may not be going very well in Germany, but nor is iron. At Duisburg on the Rhine there used to be huge barges waiting for their cargoes. To-day the Stinnes fleet floats on the waters, dead. There is no smoke in many of the great chimneys. I am on my way back to Paris.

May 20. Indeed the worst way of going up is to jump. True of Germany and true of all artists.

Especially if you want to go high.

A staircase, a method.

Lao Tze said:

¹ At that time Hitler was only the head of a party and was not taken very seriously. It must be remembered that I was writing in May 1931. The trouble got worse later.

Note Sept. 1931. The Nazis, on the day of the Jewish New Year, organised a violent anti-Semite demonstration in the Kurfurstendam. Every passerby who was taken for a Jew or who was recognised as such after a "physiological investigation" was attacked and beaten.

2nd March 1932. Yesterday, the Diet of Brunswick, in opposition to the social-Democrat vote, approved the appointment of Adolf Hitler to the new post of Councillor to the Government at the Brunswick legation in Berlin.

30th January 1933. Hitler the medievalist has been made Chancellor of the Reich. Pogroms. Exodus. Einstein refuses to return to Germany. Anti-Jewish plots. Modern thinking and modern art put on the index. Great sensation throughout the world.

PS. 1936. The wretched, the sickening sequel is known, the pogroms, the murders, Germany's withdrawal from civilisation, the departure of all her great men, the threat of war. . . .

1938. The pogroms, the exceptional laws; interdictions of every sort; to drive a car is forbidden; reinstatement of the ghettos, colossal taxation and the "compensation" by the Jews to the Jews for the destruction of their own property; the widespread emigration.

"Some men hold that it is noble to live according to a method. Others hold that a method is evil. Not to have a method is evil. To remain wholly within a rule is yet more evil. It is good first to follow a strict rule, then to discover with intelligence all the transformations. The possession of a method leads to living as though there were no method."

Understand, understand thoroughly. . . . The possession of Method gives liberty.

Met C. . . . I said to him: "So-and-so seems about finished."

"Well. What do you expect? He's getting old."

"How old is he?"

"Forty-five."

And the amazing thing is that it is true in this case and is very often true.

Do you know the photograph that Nadar took of Chevreul the physicist on his hundredth birthday? A sturdy old lion. And he was still making discoveries. As for me, I am preparing my fiftieth year. And when I am fifty I shall start preparing my sixtieth. That is the only way not to feel "settled", and not to grow old.

May 23. The night is falling. I light the lamps and look at *LIFE*. A flow of white hair vaguely suggests a sail. A memory wakens in me. I see again the superb three-master that we passed on the estuary of the Loire when I crossed it during the War, in 1917, between Paimbœuf and Donges.

The ship was sailing down the great river to the sea. The first, trembling reflections of the dawn touched her round breasts, an easterly breeze swelled in them. Light airs played in the rigging of the topsails. A boy was climbing up the ladders of the mainmast to put out the now unwanted lantern. In the silence came the deep swish and rustle of stirred, divided waters.

I am dreaming. I am almost asleep. . . .

I see the three-master at a point in the ocean where day meets night. The golden sun shines among the sails like a monstrance borne upon the Olympian wings of swans. Far away a stentorian wind leaps up, flies forth raging from the

empty plains. Furiously it charges. Beneath the huge blast the cedars, the oaks, the beeches are laid low, the elms are torn up. The storm is lit splendidly by lightning flashes; its black voice spreads terror. Owls hoot and men think of their deaths; the ancient houses and the houses that are but half built fall down. The storm rolls mightily to the sea, fills all space, bellowing like an organ. The Ocean is always stranger than the mountains; when it is furious it is yet more strange. The largest waves are much smaller than even a small hill; their deepest troughs are but very little valleys. Yet they are more strange because they die and live again unceasingly, because their noise is fantastical—a queer, dull, yet deafening roar, with suddenly a crash when the springing waves break, and then a gentle, wheedling sound when they spout foam high into the air, as though from soft lips. Another sound is very strange, for it can be heard above the uproar of the storm; the sound of myriads of bubbles bursting. And the beach's murmur is unforgettable, the flowing back and forth, back and forth, of pebbles and of shells, of grains of sand, scraps of wreckage and of skeletons. They come, they go, return and slip away, return again and slip away once more; they will be ground to powder, but always there will be other stones and other wrecks and other skeletons to take their place, century after century, so that the sand is made. If you drop your wedding-ring at the water's edge you will never see it again; suddenly it burrows and vanishes like a crab. Once I found mine in a little eddy of golden sand; but the exception is not odder than the rule.

The hurricane, the hurricane and the tornado. . . . Nothing is stable. The fictitious axis of time is shown to be a fiction indeed as the Time draws near which is the tragic, ultimate Present for those who are about to drown. The decisive hour is here; the three-master is overcome. Its flanks sink down. The boy at the masthead clings and screams, and the light dies with the child. The great ship plunges into the depths of the sea bed, breaking the branches of the deep-sea trees, or lands on some salt prairie among the submarine herds. Is

there a three-master 4,000 fathoms down in Tuscarora Deep? Or in Costa Rica Trench, which is even deeper? Yet how much less deep is the unplumbed Ocean than that other unplumbed sea the sky. . . . How strange the world is, and how strange are the judgments passed upon the world and the virtues ascribed to the things of the world! The waters are called patient and laborious, yet have strength only in their sloth. They seek only to drop, to fall, to sink down in rain, cascades, cataracts. They turn the wheels of turbines that they may reach level water again and be rid of effort. It is laziness that keeps the arches' stones aloft. In their common desire to droop, to sleep, they interfere with one another and halt stupidly, like sheep at the door of a stable, or a crowd at a Tube station. In Egypt there are keystones that have sought to fall for forty centuries. In Rome for twenty-five. Our cathedrals have aspired to collapse for eight hundred years. So it must be true that everything in the world works, even the sluggard. And the useful and the virtuous are no more than modes of measuring ends whose means are of no consequence.

Unknown life. . . . The flight of birds has become much stranger to us since we ourselves have flown. The exchange of substances that occur are infinite, and the actions and reactions, the temporary consequences. Behind the day, a curtain drawn before the night, is the universe. At this moment millions of men, because they have drunk wine, feel that they are demi-gods. At every second, in Verdun or Manchuria, a man is dying, and cries go up, and the hearts of those that love him are torn. Children cry for nothing, they say, and die—for what reason? But Mary and John, on leave from the Front, or some civilian substitute for John, are busy making new Marys and new Johns. And I would like to know one thing—why is there pain? And why, oh God! this devilish War? Groups of men hunt other groups of men and thrust metal, directly or indirectly, into their bodies. Or they delegate their assassinations to subtle and insinuating chemicals and vapours, or release, in ingenious fashion, armies of allied germs. The peoples of the world accept hard-labour in order

to try to leave their children money that soon will be worth nothing. Amazingly efficient tricks have been invented so that one can go at a tremendous speed to places that are no better. Others die to establish or to maintain tyrants. Arcadia is no longer. . . . There is an immense consumption of oil, rubber, iron, gun-powder, acids that are nitrous or sulphuric, of arsines and of prussic acids. The flowers in the green-houses blossom out of season, have no scent, but bow beneath the glorious burden of their beauty. At certain times in history more men die than babies are born, as it is now, and often there are too many hens. At other times it is the opposite. The spectacle of the world holds you spell-bound. The young green mop of the growing wheat waves in the wind's sweet breath; the mole drills its burrow, and the hide of the field is humped above its tunnelling. The earth is heavy with countless animal and vegetable things that live and then become salts, agents in other lives. We will be of service to the dandelions, and the day will come when dandelions will be rare delicacies, sold in tins. On certain days the town is ugly and stupid; on other days it is a power, a loveliness, a joy, a crystal theatre wherein the greatest heroes of the intellect perform. Much of our happiness rests on the colour of the day. Some days the light shows us an old, old world; others a world that is young, its complexion like a child's, as though it were all new. It is curious to think of oneself, for example, as pierced, constantly, by cosmic rays and wireless rays, and to reflect that nothing in ourselves and nothing in anything actually adheres to any other thing. Talk of the abhorred void! That is what we are—empty forces and an empty universe, my dear old Pascal.

Compassion is a virtue ascribed to man. One seldom looks at a very small creature, a very small plant, an absurdly little man or a too little woman without being moved to pity. But if we feel pity for very small things it is, especially, because the sight of them makes us congratulate ourselves upon our superior size. And if large things make us feel sad it is because they show us to ourselves as puny. Nevertheless their majesty

soothes us, the peace that they instil allows us to look up with satisfaction. Very great things and very small things have the same effect: they incline us to philosophy and its: "this or that—it is all the same." Yet the small thing must not be too small, for if it is, it no longer excites our alleged compassion, which is, in fact, self-satisfaction and selfishness. The pity we feel for small creatures is usually said to come from a sense of our own strength virtuously withheld. I might crush that flea, fly, fleck . . . but I do not. Which seems to me to be a false reasoning, for we do not feel pity for a flea, far less for the invisible microbe.

Would a perfectly definite and recognisable ghost be so very alarming? If it were always there, an established spectre, one could accept it quite simply as part of the ordinary world. Certainties have a soothing quality, as for, example, the certainty of death. . . .

All this because I was sleepy and because a white shape looked like a sail. . . . As a matter of fact, that is the way one always thinks if one puts down everything that passes through the mind.

May 26. Turned *LIFE* round to show it to my German translator, Gertrude Grohmann. Not such a bad impression. . . . But what I professed to call "the swarming" does not swarm much. . . .

June 11. *LIFE*. Oh lor! what a lot I still have to do! There are moments when I feel insidiously tempted to give it up. A devil of sloth whispers to me that I was an ass to take on this double job of writing and painting, since I know from experience that what I write harms me in the painters' eyes and that my painting harms me in the eyes of many writers. Sometimes I am cowardly enough to compromise by trying not to think at all. Every notion that strikes one as having life in it lets loose a train of thought and so leads to a great deal of work. One second is enough to take a snapshot or to engender a child. But such instantaneous movements require much time and care before you can get a good result. And you cannot hand over your ideas to be developed and printed by laboratories or nurses. . . .

In art-photography they have just got to Degas.

June 12. The conversation came round to politics. G . . . said that Monet, Pissaro, Cézanne kept themselves above political affairs in 1870 by going to London, or by hiding, as Cézanne did, in Provence. W . . . agreed. Someone else said that in 1914 he caught a first-class gonorrhoea through the good graces of a Brittany girl. "The Germans will be here in a fortnight," said she. "Let's have a good time now." The story was intended to prove that the young woman also pictured herself as "above politics", and that he put artists in the same boat. In direct opposition, I drew the conclusion that the youthful professional explicitly introduced politics into her art.

Love of order is an infernal nuisance. When I have got everything tidy I paint, and when I have done painting, I tidy. To-day Hanson and I tidied the terrace. There are two iron-step-ladders to be set up. We tried them here and there to see where they looked best. One has found its place beneath the trees; it will be the Bird's Staircase. The other stands against the wall that divides my terrace from the next and leads to dreamland. A nice example of how objects, that are of themselves purely utilitarian, may yet become works of art if they carry the imagination upward.

June 13. Chimney-sweeps are frequently chosen as symbols of the suffering poor, the victims of labour. Chimney-sweeps are black; black is gloomy. People seldom sentimentalise over millers, bakers, plasterers, linen-drapers. White is gay. Social laws are often built on sensations, sentiments and such-like illusions. As everything else is. . . .

June 14. The Colonial Exhibition, French West Africa. Gramophone records of negro songs. There is never the least vulgarity in primitive music. It is our civilisation that has made of art an entertainment. The great periods and the great peoples played or practised the arts. To-day we play at art-making in a playful way.

At the door of a restaurant a full-size automaton is distributing leaflets. It is amazingly true to life. People seem

embarrassed, even a little fearful, of this new "fellow man". And well they may be! They are like him. Staring at him, their eyes have the look of men staring down into a pal's still open grave. They are quite sure of their own eternal life, their own eternal happiness; the certainty makes them, automatons that they are, very hard on other men, on the other automatons. I should like to give their collective bums a good kick.

June 17. A dream. It happens in one of those vague, indeterminate worlds where "events", nevertheless, are strangely precise and spring on you with such strange precision that they remain clearly in the memory, sharp as though you had really lived and seen them. Here is the dream:

A mother is holding a little child. She flings it far away from her, and it falls on its head. The child screams. I take it in my arms, and instantly it begins to laugh. I am deeply moved. I weep tears of tenderness over the child; a maternal feeling is born in me. . . .

June 20. *LIFE*. I have been explaining to D . . . , who is in a nasty mood to-day, why certain figures reappear in various pictures of mine. He says that the recurrence is a sign of sterility, of a lack of imagination, of fertility. I always get my "elements" as perfect as possible, having a horror of the scrappy, of the thing that is not clearly and properly stated, of the thing that does not say all it has to say. And of sketches that are hurried or finicky, that are not just so. The stars of my 1930-1931 company, for instance, are "Mother and child", "Mother and daughter", "Mother and son", "Sleep", "The Lovers", "Infant at the breast", etc. They have already played a number of parts. In *LIFE*, they will enjoy an apotheosis before concluding their engagement. If they give satisfaction, I will make another contract with the best of them.

My "figures" are the terms whose power of expression I have tried out and tested. I use them as you would use nouns in a sentence. Or, rather, aphorisms in a lecture.

People are really amazing! D . . . who was going for me a moment ago, now tells me that Handel, when he composed an opera, took themes and movements out of his former operas

and used them whenever they adequately conveyed his idea. This would seem a sufficient excuse for me to do the same. It is true that D . . . dislikes Handel. Brahms is his particular joy.

June 21. Started early for the Montlhery motor-track where the Grand Prix of the French Automobile Club is being run. Chiron takes his corners with consummate ease. It looks so simple that a little lady beside me cries out that she could do the same. "If that's your famous Chiron . . . If that's all he can do . . ." No doubt she had looked forward to a brilliant sketch of a catastrophe, dramatically avoided. She clapped and shrieked with pleasure when one of the motorists, a well known bungler,¹ just missed turning turtle at the bend and flung up his arms, denouncing heaven and his car. Painters do this too. They pretend to make subtle mistakes, evolve pseudo-virtuosities that are no more than clever little tricks that serve to hide their incompetence.

Back at the Porte d'Orléans the newspaper headlines are shouting President Hoover's sensational move: "War Debts! America may accept a moratorium!"² They must be mad with joy in Berlin, decking the streets, getting all worked up. "Germany will be mighty Germany again!" etc. etc. In a few weeks, in a month or so, since reality never comes up to expectation, they will change their tune, the wind will go out of them; there will be moans and tears again.³

June 22. Talky-talky over the Hoover proposition. Some people, Briand, for instance, want to end the matter in a large, affectionate gesture. But the voters might not like it. That is the worst of democracies: their elected leaders can only act in a way the people can understand. And our grasping

¹ Imprisoned in 1935 for embezzlement. Condemned by default in 1938 for selling bogus Spanish works of art.

² At that time the War Debts were one of the chief axes of the political situation. To-day, America, glutted with gold, has a "surplus gold" crisis. So the U.S.A. does not want the War Debts paid in specie—she has too much of it already—nor in goods, for that would increase her unemployment. Moral: never pay your debts.

³ *Note 4th July 1931.* Havas: "Results of the Hoover proposal. What has been the effect in Germany of the Hoover proposal? It has contributed to the country's ruin. This may seem paradoxical, but is strictly true. Many people imagined that the sudden intervention of the American President could only be explained by the extreme gravity of the Reich's financial situation. A wave of optimism passed over Germany, followed by renewed depression and fear."

peasants—the majority of the electorate—how many of them would understand an act of open generosity, apparently gratuitous generosity, in Germany's favour? Germany will be given help, I hope. But secretly, so that the German people will accuse us of stinginess and have yet another reason to hate us. And we shall have spent the same amount of money without getting any credit for our peace-making intentions.

June 23. Both men were completely ruined by the War. They are telling each other of their past glories. "I was richer than you were," says the first. "I was much richer than you!" says the second. The conversation ended spitefully, neither being willing to admit that he had been the poorer man.

June 26. Went to see the collection of Mr. Gold, art-dealer. We talked about pictures. I put it to him that the "plastic qualities" that have become the very aim of art to-day are still only "technique". That is to say a means of forcing us—by compulsion or by cajolery—to go through the door that leads into the world of feeling and ideas. Many artists, unfortunately, hoodwink us into thinking that they can open the true door. In fact there is nothing behind their doors. Door-keepers pompously pulling the catch of dummy doors.

June 28. A woman goes by. Her enormous rump trots after her, trying to catch her up.

A shiny motor-car stops in the Avenue Reille, before No. 58. Loud and repeated hootings. A gentleman gets down, looks at the house, calls up: "Well? Are you coming?" and smiles, pointing to a dead bird that he is holding in his hand. An evasive, suggestive, unreasoned art has its own rights. This is surrealism: Max Ernst.

July 13. The newspapers:

"Germany at bay. The chief exchanges are closed. One of the biggest of the German banks, the 'Danat', has stopped payment." (As the notoriety stirred up round the crashing of great banks, round swindlers and men of finance, is ephemeral, I will note quickly that the Danat was a vast syndicate whose bursting was so loud that President Hoover heard it in his

holiday camp at Rapidan.) "Dr. Luther, President of the Reichsbank, has flown to Basel." "Consternation in Berlin." "France cannot be the only country to help Germany."

Germany's affairs are altogether distressing. "Hoover's Gesture"—that monumental, Liberty-lighting-the-world gesture, that mighty blessing to far-off Europe, those world-angel wings stretching across the Atlantic, spreading their guardian virtue over the old Continent—was it not after all a large-sized Stock Exchange manœuvre destined to save American interests in Germany? The question is being asked.

Official Germany weeps Niagaras. What is really moving the hearts of the truly sensitive, and of those who fear floods, is the cry of the cataract: "Take care! They are coming! The new Northmen, the Communists are coming!" so that Dr. Luther's groans make a great impression on the average Frenchman and his dislike of floods and Northmen and especially Bolsheviks.¹ And indeed the Frenchman, the expert in domestic thrift, is sincerely sorry for his neighbour, pities him in his new collapse. I myself felt that France had been too slow in responding to Hoover's appeal. All the same it is galling to be constantly told: "You Frenchmen aren't given to lending, are you? And *you've* got savings!" It is the fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper over again, and the Ant, as everybody agrees, has never been a sympathetic figure, even to the Ant-Frenchman. The actor Sylvain once made a record of the fable in which he tried, by introducing subtle, successive variations in his diction, to give a picture of the Ant that was first pleasing and then unpleasing. Even his great gifts could not make the Ant anything but unpleasing, all the time. And we are ants all right.

There is no doubt that when the history of France's position this 14th of July 1931 is written, it will appear full of "glory". Undoubtedly the Government, while unable to undo the effects of the Washington knock altogether, has managed to

¹ Note 1937. It would be well to remember that, before Hitler, the anti-Communist policy that broke out so vigorously at the time of the Spanish revolution was already clearly defined. Hitler did not invent even that.

weaken it considerably. The truth is that our masters have obstinately and persistently resisted America. "Only a great nation can oppose the will of the American Colossus."

Dr. Luther, Regent of the Imperial German Bank, and his tragic flight of 'planes, has come to ask France to save his country. He is asking for a loan, a big loan. The Government has replied that it must insist, first, on certain peace-measures; the building of the Cruiser B must be stopped and Germany must give up the idea of the *Anschluss* with Austria. Germany is enraged: "France wishes to strengthen her hegemony by suppressing all her rival's means of resistance." This is probably true. France is accustomed to look on Germany as a dangerous war menace, on England as a country that is jealous of France, that resents her dictating the policy of Europe. France's attitude of mind is that of a weak people. She has no notion of her real position in Europe and the world so that her ministers are often compelled to act timidly or equivocally, as though they were the representatives of a really weak people. France's official actions seem, in fact, narrow and equivocal. Yet the people are very much alive, hard-working, intelligent, supple-minded. They would stand for boldness and enterprise, provided one knew how to move their feelings in the right way. The State behaves like a rapacious old woman clinging on to her income, short-sighted in one eye, blind in the other, even when she thinks that she is being bold. And yet our present power cannot be denied; being so strong France could afford to be merciful.

July 18. "International negotiations are going forward with a view to helping the finances of the Reich." It is just as I said the other day. The French ant, having hoarded all she can, is now in a position to lord it over the entire world's affairs—another proof of the power of the infinitely small, of the grain of sand. Chancellor Brüning and Dr. Curtius arrive to-morrow. It is the first time, apparently, since the War that German ministers have come to Paris.

July 20. Messrs. Brüning and Curtius in Paris. They conferred for nearly three hours yesterday afternoon with Messrs.

Laval, Briand, Flandin, Pietri and François Poncet—a “broad exchange of views”, bearing not only on the measures necessary to overcome the financial crisis, but also on the whole question of Franco-German relations, and “a mutual concern for the establishment of an enduring collaboration between the two peoples”. In the morning Chancellor Brüning was invited to attend mass at Our Lady of Victories. French tact! . . .

July 21. Melancholy. A grey week spent in white-washing the house. White is cheerful. It makes me look forward to days of happy work.

The effect of architectural environment. . . . Sometimes I empty the studio, make it a desert. This leads one to reject, to renounce; it helps me to concentrate and to judge my pictures severely in the cold, bare light. To-day, on the contrary, I have arranged everything as finely as my pocket will allow. My big mural paintings are hung up and give the walls nobility. I do all this from a need to recover a more optimistic frame of mind. I am anxious about *LIFE*.

The disappointment that followed the Hoover hope makes these hopeless times yet sadder. Will our whole lives be spent in this half-war with Germany? The rain is unceasing. Not a yard of blue sky to give peace to the spirit, or at the least a way of escape to the eye. Nature, why are you crying?

August 2. To the Natural History Museum to study the skeletons. I am thinking of putting one into *LIFE*. The building in which the palaeolithic collections are housed is in the 1900 style. The banisters of the big staircase are a rich profusion of chrysanthemums in macarooned iron; on the walls hang the large fossil imprints of “*encrinurus liliiformis*”, which are themselves very “International Exhibition of 1900” in manner, and have, no doubt, been put there for this reason.

I travelled through the bottles, in the heart of mystery. The flabby death of organs pickled in yellow alcohol is disgusting. But fossils and skeletons, death in its hard shape, attracts one. Even in life the softer tissues seldom reach the “intellectual” perfection that you see in bones. The blood-

vessels lack the geometric, the visibly orderly air that pleases one in Nature, where Nature is pleasing. Hydrocarbons, fats, gelatins, protoplasm: unstable and perishable raw materials of an extravagant animal life, based on slow decomposition. You feel that here is individuality and here is frailty. A beautiful woman moves us in great measure because of the fragile and transient nature of her blossoming. That is why sadness is so often the background of love. The mineral persistence of the bone reassures us; a lasting element, it gives us of its security. Love that is tenderness goes to the fragile; friendship goes to the mineral, the virile. Little is needed to restore to us our sense of the eternal. Our reason alone doubted it, our instinct scarcely at all. Were instinct to doubt it would seem to be doubting its own existence. We can no more picture our utter dissolution than we can picture infinity.

Two little foetuses, an inch or so in size, float like Cartesian divers in their jars, linked by their navel cords to the mother's uterus, which is part of the exhibit. They are not at all repulsive, for they are white as alabaster and look quite solid; the two cords that hold them captive and that once bound them to life, form angles of the sort that are immediately pleasing; their faces with the closed, sleeping eyes, tell of the security of permanence, of the great white silence of life's secrets—the silence that to us is death. The foetuses seem to live in the final void an eternal death. They are small as Saxe figurines and big as the world.

I went round the galleries and saw every species of animal skeleton. How intricate, how complicated, protests the thrifty housewifely human mind! What works of osteological superfetation! The serpent's endless chains of vertebrae, the clumsy limbs of primitive creatures, the plethoric cetacean carcasses that are like the ribs of some prehistoric ship, built by a carpenter's apprentice who had all the free wood of the virgin forest to use and waste—A man's skeleton brings you up short. It is sober, elegant, simple, smart, economical, definite. One is at home again. This is a system where "economy" is the predominating rule. And Nature doesn't care two hoots.

On the first floor of the Museum, among the big prehistoric birds, is the Archaeopteryx. It looks as though it had been suddenly frozen, suddenly turned to stone. The most dramatic object I have ever seen. And here is the fossil of the Wurtemberg female Ichthyosaurus with its young still in its womb.

Teeth of the Oxyrhinous sharks, the ancestor of the Oxyrhinchous that was the totem of the 19th Nome of Egypt, that same repulsive fish that ate the sacred members of Osiris. . . . Here are the cerithia, the fossil sea-urchins that we used to hunt for among the pebbles of my father's stone-yards, together with the little circular nummulites that the workmen called "liards". In those days the liard, the half-farthing piece, was still in semi-official use in the country districts. We made a collection of stone coins, always choosing those whose spirals were most successfully "engraved"—whorls that seem to be the whorls upon the thumb of the Creator.

I used to like Whistler's delicate picture of *Little Rose of Lyme Regis*. The Museum has a belemnite found at Lyme Regis. The belemnite is the forefather of the cuttle-fish, the wily fish that, when chased, blackens the water like a fountain-pen being cleaned—and vanishes—as dreadnoughts and fighting-planes do—into the blackness. For this reason Pliny called it "the craftiest of molluscs". Sepia is made, or used to be made, from it. The palaeontologist who arranges the shelves at the Museum has painted a portrait of the creature as it was in life, using for the purpose the fossilised sepia of the Lyme Regis belemnite. The tone of the portrait is very "evanescent", very Whistlerian.

It is always pleasant to recall that the Diplodocus is 84 feet long and that the Iguanodon was discovered in Belgium 1,066 feet beneath the surface of the earth. The following inscription appears below it: "This creature marks the geological era when the earth's beings had reached their greatest size yet were still, in many ways, inferior. It therefore demonstrates the fact that material development is not a condition of supreme perfection. Catalogue No. 1899/1." I am not acquainted with the author of this dogmatic catalogue; his

anti-Marxian principles are delicately conveyed and so is his astonishing discovery that quantity and quality are sometimes different.

Everything in the place is dead. The prehistoric Man of Mentone sleeps in his glass-case, his head among his ritual sea-shells. His skeleton is ochred with the ochre that those who buried him spread upon his corpse and that has sunk and settled on his bones as the flesh melted. I was lost in profound meditation, my mind nicely balanced between the question "What is man?", the enormous size of the *Diplodocus*, and the enormous fortune of its donor, the great Mr. Carnegie, when a terrific roar came from the direction of the *Brontosaurus*. The two crimson-faced keepers who were sprawling side by side on a bench, start and leap to their feet, haggard with horror. They look fearfully round. They stare, astonished, at each other. They rub their bewildered eyes. At last they understand that the monstrous noise was a sudden crescendo in their own snoring. Seeing me, they become extremely dignified, and a moment later, recovering their policeman's manner, call out, both together, their arms folded authoritatively on their breasts: "Hi! there! Don't touch!" I was only touching the glass of a show-case. Presently I hear one of them say: ". . . must sleep. I can't sleep at night for the mosquitoes." And the other: "It's the blinking wireless next door. . . . Phew! It's hot!" A smell of cheap wine mingles with the smell of death.

Out into the *Jardin des Plantes* to breathe the live air. Children are climbing on to camels from the "Landing-stage". The police regulations posted up beside it require the children to "embark" one by one. The stage stands in the shade of a palm tree of painted wood. A peculiarly pungent smell strikes our noses. The man who superintends the children's pony-rides throws a furious glance at the Ship of the Desert's guardian, a dark-complexioned gentleman, his hated rival: "It's that pig of a camel again!"

Not far from where the camel treads his pontifical way, is the mineralogical building. Shells, skeletons, fossils often take

on the classic shapes of Mediterranean art, which is a direct art. China triumphs among the minerals. They are twisted, swollen, kidney and globe-shaped, super-picturesque, tormented. Uranocircite, Chrysocolla, Chalcocite put on mandarin airs, and one is quite surprised to see Autunite, whose name reminds one of France, assuming a Mongolian colouring. Sulphur crystals play the part of the yellows, other crystals play the red, the green, the blue, the violet in this Russian Ballet palette, this paint-box for Impressionists, parrots, subterranean rainbows. The Micaceous Haematite apes a starlit sky. As for Molybdenite, which is like crumpled silver paper, it sets one dreaming of tea-time in Eldorado, or in the Ural Mountains. It is rather charming to find that French geologists, when speaking of rainwater and surface water that saturate the soil and gradually transform, demolish and finally reduce to a base-level the features of the earth, refer to them as "eaux sauvages", and that mineralogists distinguish as "juvenile waters" those that have been formed within the earth itself and are actually "liquid rock" that has never seen the light of day. Iceland Spar presents two parallel images of any object seen through it. The effect is lovely but ends by giving you the feeling that it is squinting like a Slav woman (with all the well-known Slav charm). So I drop the Icelandic lady and take up with an honest block of Rock Crystal who looks you straight in the eyes, out of the depths of her pure heart. There are also fantastic-looking stones that are like hair-combings or like the cacti that we call *perruques de concierge*. And I had forgotten the precious stones. They shine a lot.

But for abstract lyrical excitement the meteorites break all records. A polished section reveals exquisitely distinguished damasquined arabesques, known as Widmanstaeten figures, clear signs of the Creator's geometric tastes. The heavenly stones come to earth with great pomp and fury in brilliant flashes of very blue light. They are burning hot on the surface, owing to the tremendous speed with which they passed through the air, but within they are ice-cold: the stars of which they

are the ruined fragments inhabited incredibly cold regions. At the Museum is a lump of iron that weighs over half a ton. The Greeks worshipped a stone that fell from Olympus into the Aegos Potamos River. Heliogabalus also worshipped a stone. In China there is an aerolite that is just under fifty feet high and weighs over ten tons. In Tucuman in S. America is an aerolitic mass weighing thirteen and a half tons. In Siberia, in 1908, the earth was torn and pounded by a terrific sky-bombardment; the celestial fire destroyed, directly and indirectly, seventy-five square miles of forest; the disturbance in the atmosphere was felt as far away as England. In Madrid, on the 10th of February, 1896, there appeared, in broad daylight, a flash so brilliant that it lit all Spain and the South of France. A fireball. It burst with a mighty crash, and many people died of terror. Orgeuil, in Tarn et Garonne, is extremely proud of the heavenly messenger that came to it in 1865. At St. Christophe-la-Chartreuse in the Vendée, on the 5th of November, 1841, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, there fell a stone weighing eleven pounds. "The Courts of Roche-sur-Yon were called upon to give judgment as to who was the rightful owner of the meteorite. It had fallen in a ditch that divided two fields owned by two men, had been discovered and picked up by a third and sold to a fourth" (A. Lacroix). But this was not the first time that human justice had been mixed up with extra-terrestrial affairs: on the 7th of March, 1618, an aerolite set fire to the Palais de Justice in Paris. In 1654, in Milan, a poor devil of a Franciscan monk who was going along, praising Nature, no doubt, as his master St. Francis did before him, got a knock on the head from one of heaven's pebbles and died. There are little aerolites, pocket aerolites. And there are others yet smaller—the cosmic dust that dirties the eternal snows and increases the weight of the earth by several tons a year, thereby endangering its speed of rotation and threatening to give us, with a slower rate of spinning, a longer day. I would like to have a piece of Sirius's mate, the sort of piece that is small enough to go in a match-box and weighs two ton; it would be a grand joke to play on the weight-lifting

merchants. The people call aerolites "thunder-stones", "stones fallen from heaven". The scientists, headed by Lavoisier, jeered at them. The Academy of Science declared unanimously that the idea was bunkum. Yet, in 1803, Biot, after the fall of the Laigle meteor in the Orne, established the true origin of aerolites. The Navajos Indians have a legend that told of a god who came down dressed in fire and plunged into the desert. In Arizona there was, in fact, a deep cavity that was said to be the crater of an extinct volcano but was proved later to be the point where a formidable bolide had struck the earth. A company was formed in 1920 with a capital of 850 million dollars, to exploit the heaven-sent mine. The chief mass was 1,600 feet below the earth's surface; a shaft of that depth had to be cut to reach it. It contained several hundred million hundredweight of iron, six million hundredweight of nickel, and two million hundredweight of cobalt, copper, platinum and iridium. M. Lacroix has informed the Science Academy that in the Adrar there is a meteorite half buried in the ground that is 325 x 130 x 130 feet in size.¹

Worn out by these celestial emotions I can do no more than hurry through the galleries where the stuffed beasts are. The corpses try very hard to look playful or cruel or ferocious. Creatures preserved in this "lifelike" state are indeed perfect images of the literal, of "naturalism" in painting or in literature. They stink of the gutting shop and the furrier. There is one bird that has the glassy and murderous eye of an old whore who has come down in the world and makes her living hawking doubtful lobsters on a little barrow.

The cases of shells whose species are still living make a pleasant refuge. It would appear, however, that the modern types are not up to their older level. The newer shells have a little professional, technical air. They are not at all smart; they seem to have decided to do their mollusc job in overalls.

¹ *Note 1932.* Devaux: "Mr. St. John Philby has discovered in the desert of Rub'el Khali, in Arabia, two twin craters curiously situated in the ruins of the ancient town of Wabar. The ruined houses are riddled with heavenly projectiles of various sizes." One hundred and fifty milliards of shooting stars appear in our atmosphere yearly.

The shapes of most of them are vulgar, oysterish, commonplace. The Nautilus is the only exception. It is really the most elegant thing in God's Bond Street. But then it is, the refined creature, the *sole* descendant of the Primitive Age of shells. At that price one could be blue-blooded several times over. From the labels on the cases one might pick out, for the sake of the sound: "Mother-of-pearl of the Melagrina shell"; and for the sake of the picture: "The colibri or humming-bird feeds upon the nectar of flowers by thrusting its beak into the calyx without alighting."

In another part of the Museum the pale Myrithis, magician of Antinoë in the Thebaid, lies in her coffin. The flowers of her wreath are pale as dead beauties, the tambourine with which she danced lies by her. Myrithis is dry as a chip and the skin of her belly resounds like a tambourine. They say that she has many sweethearts.

August 15. The sky is of mother-of-pearl, pale clouds whipped by the wind, like pearls in an oyster shell. It is the same sky that swam behind the island of Egina last year, as we sailed by. The very sky I first wanted for *LIFE*, but that seemed too rare, too unusual.

August 24. Dangerous careers: "Fatal accident in Warsaw. The starter of a bicycle race, firing a shot as the signal for a race to start, killed two spectators."¹

A very strange thing has happened to Marcel Arnac the humorist. The pump of the municipal water supply was about four hundred yards from his house. The big wheel had been there and at work since the Second Empire. Arnac was in his dining-room, quietly eating his evening meal, when there came through the wall a huge lump of iron; the wheel had just burst. He was killed.²

Dream. I am in a theatre. It is built like a Greek theatre, but in place of the proscenium columns are a number of little

¹ Note 1932. Kate de Nagy the star wounded her hand giving the starting-signal at the Cologne Six-Day race.

² Note 1936. While I was in Paris this summer the fly-wheel of a pump in the Boulevard St. Jacques went through the wall of the building it was in and broke against the house where I was staying, riddling it with fragments.

cafés. A sort of Mistinguette is singing. Having received her applause, she goes off. While she is away I get up and begin to sing in her place and in her style, aping and exaggerating her mannerisms. The audience is very much amused. The singer comes back, and everyone rags her. She stands gaping, unable to make out what is happening. She goes off into the wings. I then come down on to the stage and start a caricature of a Spanish dance. Little by little I get more and more excited. The dance has become a real dance for me; I am taking it quite seriously, and I know that the audience is admiring the beauty of my performance. But the orchestra goes on with the caricature, and this interferes with my dancing. Each time my steps bring me in front of the players I roll my eyes at them furiously. But still they do not understand; they go on with their fooling more vigorously than ever. I leave the stage in disgust.

The dream is immediately followed by another. We have to pay a visit to someone, somewhere. We are at the end of an avenue that is like the Avenue de la Grande Armée. We go into the local railway station to ask a clerk to direct us to Breadpan Street, he does not know the place and calls out to another clerk:

"I say. Where is Breadpan Street?"

"Never heard of Washpan Street."

They get it clearer:

"Not Washpan, Breadpan."

"Oh! I thought you said Washpan. Breadpan Street is in Puteaux. Straight along, second turning on the left."

Suzon comes into my mind. Is it the word Puteaux (put, putage) that makes me think of her? To pun in dreams makes punning unnecessary in ordinary life. And it gives one a notion of the undoubted poetic power of the puns and the *quid pro quos*, the various absurdities that poets like Jarry, Apollinaire, Max Jacob and their dada and surrealist descendants used so happily in their work.

LIFE. There is an extraordinary richness in natural objects; magnify them to any size and you will go on discovering

further matters to delight your senses and your mind. The same power is found sometimes in Architecture, but is generally absent in painting.

The nearer you get to Nature the more you see the details of its structure. Put them under stronger and yet stronger magnifying glasses—they change and are constantly renewed. We have no idea, as yet, of how far our discoveries can go. Indirectly the ultramicroscope has already revealed the existence of particles that are a ten-thousandth of a millimeter in diameter. It is more than likely that still smaller particles will presently be known. To be able to renew one's vision of life at will is a powerful poetic stimulus. How lovely that woman's skin is! I look at it closer. Tiny folds appear and lovely pale colours. With my glasses I can see them better. An ordinary magnifying glass shows you a down that is softer than a young bird's down, and geometric reticulations like the outlines of the alleged canals of Mars. A small microscope hollows trenches, raises hills whose slopes are clothed with forests. I focus the top lens, and a single drop of moisture or of fat shines on the scene like a rising sun. Increase the power, and you have a strange lunar landscape torn by ravines, heaped with mountains. If you go on, the cells become visible, and then the active centres and their chemistry, and then a single molecule, filling the entire field of vision. Were we able to see the atom that would be the end, for from that point we leave the domain of flesh; the specific identity of the molecule is lost and we come into the place of disconnected components, anonymous, impersonal, floating in emptiness as stars float in the heavens, the ions whose transit is seen in the mist of Wilson's apparatus and whose phosphorescence, on the screen of Sir William Crookes' spinthariscopes, looks like a starlit sky. Finally we would "see" the waves, that is (till someone finds another): the raw material of the universe.

To know these real and imagined aspects of a thing helps to build up one's idea of it. Stored in the "actual" memory, the successive images are automatically superimposed on any "actual" vision, and so make it various and exciting.

An artist's picture cannot be seen from so many angles. You must look at it from the right distance, neither too near nor too far, so that the necessary illusion, the necessary transformation of matter takes place. It is usually considered that a picture should be seen from a distance equal to its own diagonal. Or twice its diagonal, the point has not been definitely settled. In this way the eye takes in the whole surface of the canvas at one glance.

I would like to make *LIFE* renew itself according to the distance from which it was viewed. From a certain way off, you would get the monumental, the poster impression. As you drew nearer new aspects would unfold before you; each part would assume the importance of a whole and would be gradually transformed. The very substance of the paint should be so charged with life that it could be looked into closely, for its own sake.

In other words, I would like it if *LIFE* could be looked at from every distance between thirty yards—the length of a large hall—and one foot, the normal close range.

The strength of art lies at all times in its capacity to create entities that are at once limited and whole, unities that are on man's scale, finite universes that are within his scope. The number of elements in these aesthetic worlds can be very considerable, yet they will be linked together by their own inner laws, which are man's laws, even as the elements of the real world are linked together by the forces of Nature. A work of art may, therefore, lend itself to the successive investigations of which I have been speaking. And that is the work I am attempting. I know that I shall probably fail at it. But one should surely give oneself tasks that seem at the moment insurmountable and try, nevertheless, to surmount them?

News in Brief: Mademoiselle Sangoi of Lyons lost a lot of money at the Vichy Casino. Wishing to obtain 50,000 francs from the Insurance company, she blew up a house that belonged to her with dynamite and blew herself up with it. It is said that her mother helped her. Result: eleven dead and fourteen wounded.

"A new wind blows in the friendships of men and the bonds of cities." (Sophocles.)

"Messrs. Briand, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Laval, Prime Minister, are going to Berlin in a few days. This will be the first time since 1878 that a French Prime Minister will visit the German capital. Monsieur François Poncet is replacing Monsieur de Margerie as Ambassador at the Pariserplatz."

Certain of the municipal corporations are passing bylaws to suppress "interference" on the Wireless. Monsieur Mellet, legal adviser to the Council of State and the Court of Appeal, is to decide up to what point the said bylaws, intended to restrain the activities of dynamos and other "interference" producers, are legal. Please note that this Light of our Legislature is President of the Legal and Technical Committee for the suppression of interference. He writes:

"If the purpose of broadcasting were only to transmit music and literature, if it had, in fact, no other object than to amuse and entertain listeners, the decrees issued by the mayors against interference could not be enforced. They would constitute an infringement of the right that every citizen has of using such apparatus as he pleases, and could not be justified on the grounds of general public interest. But . . . broadcasting is used to-day for the control and direction of aeroplanes and ships, for the diffusion of meteorological reports, for propaganda in the Colonies and in foreign countries, etc., for conveying information to the Prefecture of Police—by means of transmitting stations on aeroplanes and motor-cars—of street gatherings and disturbances. . . ."

These remarks show how deeply the men of the law, even where they are full of sympathy and good intentions, appreciate the social uses of the arts. "An amusing entertainment. . . ." Dear, dear. . . .

August 25. Took a walk beyond the old fortifications. What a lot of mattress springs! Has anyone noticed the extraordinary ubiquity of mattress springs? There are quantities of them at the seaside; they gather in their tens of thousands in the town's outlying streets. Mattress springs are apt to go in couples. Sometimes they are linked, their spirals amorously entwined. You can see them on the outskirts of Montrouge, tribes of them asleep on the grass, in the ditches, like the townspeople. To disentangle two united mattress springs is a difficult business, but it is good practice for the patience and the will, an admirable exercise for the geometric faculty. When one sinusoidal, biconical shape is joined to another, two-fold combinations are produced that can only be represented by an extremely complex and variable equation; the mere act of holding the quivering, elastic steel in your hands makes it form an infinity of different shapes. Threefold combinations yield helical structures that are almost too daring; and as for four-fold combinations, one cannot possibly formulate their law. Beyond four, mathematics become cosmic.

It is not enough to look at Saturn through a telescope—one must also study the habits of springs; they provide the geometrician that every painter should carry in his heart, with new delights. Take a spring and throw it up into the sky, as high as possible, so that it falls at a good distance. We used to do this constantly, my friend Hanson and I, at Honfleur. This is the true technique: Catch hold of one of the end circles, concentrate all your available vital energy (a good breakfast, subtle in flavour and nourishing in substance, will contribute to the performance of this mechanical opera); bring every muscle into play, including those that are seldom called upon and are consequently lazy, such as muscles at the top of the loins, or those behind the ears, or in the scalp; co-ordinate your mind in such a way as to send a current swiftly to your nerves, that all your sleepy cells may be awakened and every member of their vast community be well-charged with electricity, made altogether ready to work jointly and severally in the interests of the proposed act;

stretch the arm to its full extent and swing the trunk vigorously round and back; breathe deeply; hold your breath and forget everything but this one thing that it is essential to your will-to-power that your mattress-spring should break a record. Then start spinning rapidly upon the point of your left toe, the axis of your collective strength. Spin faster, faster. At the highest point of speed fling the arm forward and let go. The spring uncoils and goes up, up, up. . . .

Watch it. See the lovely clear parabola it makes against the sky. A little humming sound comes from it, and away it floats serenely into space.

Suddenly, by a shifting in the centres of gravity, it twists as though it had been jerked in the back, and begins to mount like a tumbler, arse over tip. It turns over and over, over and over. But at last its flight stops. The earth has decided that this fantastic climbing has lasted long enough, and calls it back again, gently at first, then with increasing insistence. And soon the spring weakens, yields; the pull that keeps it from its starry ambitions is too strong, the struggle too hard. It pauses, hovers and plays at being a concertina. This is its swan-song. The earth has beaten you and your transmitted powers, and so the sight of the falling spring makes you feel sad. Nothing is left in it of the strength you gave; it is a commonplace inert mass that knows only gravity. It drops; it is no more than a little foam in the hollow of a wave.

It lies upon the sand, pretending to sleep, pretending to lie for ever in the midst of the eternal waters. But in fact it is not asleep; it is setting the atoms of its steel in order; its molecules are resting, gathering strength for the next performance. For the genius of springs lies in their capacity to endure every affront, every constraint, and to leap up again, unchanged and strong as ever. Which adds a little moral to the tale. The tide will bring it back some day, you may be sure of that. Spring-beings have a formidable energy. Nothing can kill them but rust. And many years will go by before the iron-oxide is wholly restored to the universal store.

Someone ought to write the story of the birth, life and



"LIFE" THE "SWARMING"

death of a mattress-spring with all the object and other lessons that could be drawn from it. I pass it to you.¹

The sun shone brightly to-day. To try and get a little warmth into my bones—the weather lately has been positively freezing—I took a sun-bath on the terrace. Have caught a slight cold. There has not been such a wet August since the reign of Louis XIV. The rainfall was such, on that occasion, that Cardinal Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, bade his clergy recite, at mass, the orison *Ad postulandam serenitatem* to obtain the cessation of the rain and to go on doing so until the rain stopped.

I have just realised with some astonishment, that an extreme shyness occasionally overtakes me. There are days, for example, when to go into a shop and ask the price of some object is utterly repulsive to me. Sometimes even the sternest effort of will does not break down the inhibition.

August 26. *The Day of Spirals.* I am pursued by the idea that the spiral is one of the traps into which our aesthetic sensibility falls most easily.

The voluble shape talks of many things. It tells you of the strength of springs, of the resilience of steel, of the suppleness of tropical creepers and of loving arms and of the cat-race. We have a particular liking for the spiral, especially the spiral whose volutes widen as they rise, like two arms stretched out to call, to enfold us. Before shapes of this kind we breathe more deeply. A profound aesthetic emotion quickens our heart-beats, makes our breath come faster. These physical changes always occur in the presence of any thing that is of high quality; almost, they may be said to be a measure of the beautiful. There are three very different varieties of fossil ammonites. One is elegant; it is like the Roman war trumpets that curled so imperially over the shoulder of the trumpeter. The whorls of the second are few and heavy and curl soberly.

¹ Note 1938. "BED CATAPULTS BOY. John Griffin, aged five, of Poole Hill, Bournemouth, was bouncing on the springs of the mattress in his bedroom to-day when he was thrown through the glass of his bedroom window and fell 30 feet from the second floor into the garden. . . ." (*Evening Standard*, 19th December 1938.)

The third has many coils laid edge to edge. The three elementary types have a chastened eloquence that is profoundly expressive. In the course of evolution they have developed excrescences—transversal projections, sharp points, flutings—that hinder the growth of the vectors, check the natural progress of the eye, delay the culmination of the movement and so interfere with the release, the pleasure of our minds and spirits.

I have been accused, at times, of giving my personal tastes too universal a character and of assuming that they are more widespread, more general than the facts warrant. Leonce Rosenberg asked me to go with him yesterday to a museum. Being curious to see the reactions of a man whose love and understanding of beautiful things is sensitive and scholarly, I took him to the shell section of the palaeontological collection. I said no word and made no movement. He stopped at once, spontaneously, before precisely the same shells that had stopped me on former visits.

Mrs. Erich Mendelsohn says in a letter: "On the Acropolis I found the seeds of a plant that I have never seen before. The ground is covered with it. I have no notion what it is, but was very much struck with its likeness to the Ionian volute. Could this seed be the original of the Ionian capital?"

She has put some of the seeds in her letter. I will sow them and see what happens. Meanwhile I feel inclined to sing the praises of the spiral, of the spiral-daughters of Nature and industry and science and art. . . .

Ammonites and horns of Jupiter Ammon; curls of women's and of children's hair, of negroes' hair, of fur; eddies of water and of air and those that the wind spins on the sands and on the snows; wreathed wisps upon the edge of cirrus clouds; young fronds; leaves of the acanthus; ears and other sinuses; snakes and viscera and well-coiled ropes; multiple bonds—the whipping that holds the flint or the iron to the arrow, that makes fishing-tackle and the springs of racing cars firm and keeps the hands that grasp the wheel from slipping, that binds the limbs of wounded men; the swaying of tops that turn until their strength dies, and the dizzy round of gold,

exhausting capital; the engine-turned designs on banknotes, black line and white line; the curling and uncurling of plants and of feathers whose cells obey the will of the great forces; trunks of elephants and flies and ant-eaters; tongues of chameleons; wings of Chaldean, Assyrian and Hittite sphinxes and of Cretan lions and archaic lions; converging circles of the ball about the spirepole; capitals, molluscs, conches; all the spiriform shells—the cerithia, spirifer, spirorbis, turritella, and a multitude of others; proud cuttings from the blacksmith's shop, proud clippings from the ram; handlers of ewers; the mating of the propeller and the water or the air; generating curve of the helianthus, which is the sun-flower; spiral fire-streams of a thousand protozoa, radiolaria, vibrions; tiny, screw-shaped seeds; the screw movement of an object that falls at a tangent and is caught by gravity; path of the wild creatures of the sky and the earth and the sea encircling their prey; shavings of metal or of wood; coil-springs and clock-springs; shapes of gasteropods—the snail and the helix; screw-gear and worm-gear; path of leaping rockets; the leaps of kids and young animals; boxers' fantastic hooks; spiral staircases; hunting horns; helicons, French horns, souzaphones and other wind instruments; the ascent of helicopters and autogiros; the travelling of a point upon a gyrating shell or on stars that gyrate and travel; ringed lines of a torus; successive states of a thread unrolling; graph of a movement that is gradually slowing down; base of a basket; the masterly corkscrew spins of skaters; corkscrews; the loops and lacings of certain uniforms; scribbles and doodles; all twists and convolutions, cream-puffs, sugar-sticks and hewgags; bland geometric gestures of orchestral conductors, drummers, diplomats, orators, popular preachers; pigs' tails and some dogs' tails; tendrils of vines; screws of augurs and of gimlets, drills and wimbles; soaring of birds; 'planes looping; 'planes and leaves falling; curling of the whiplash after the crack; laces and sparteries; majestic volutes of the buttresses on the Salute in Venice and many Jesuit churches; the happy flourish of the calligrapher and the painstaking paraph, subtly devised and

meticulously performed, of the old clerk (art and commerce); radial, gnomonic, logarithmic spiral-pulsations of innumerable organs, organisms, beasts and beasties; gatherings of mosquitoes whirling at nightfall; Chinese ornaments and the finger-nails of Chinese mandarins, interminably curving; shoots of the convolvulus; bishops' croziers; scrolls of stringed instruments; strings, strands, cables, flexes, especially of the telephone; twisted columns; the movement of smoke rising in a quiet place; the invisible movement of the air that a cigarette makes visible; the upward twist, the downward twist of the weaver's shuttle; spinning fall of arrows; windings of inductance-coils that trap the waves; the patterns formed by magnetic fields; solenoids, rotors, chokes; conchoid curves of the split flint; twirling tentacles of medusas and many other organisms; kiss-curls on the cheeks of Carmen and her like; swirlings of stuffs and ribbons in the breeze; sailswelling; flames of the sun's corona; the structural law of nummulites; whirlwinds, cyclones, tornadoes, typhoons, nebula maelstroms; helical gears and cam gears, beautifully seen in the sweet-making machines of fairs and sweet-shops; the skew-tendency of material surfaces; roads winding up hills towards the summit; the path of least resistance of the climbing donkey; the ways of Santorin and many Aegean islands; tracks of gramophone records; ornaments beloved of the Bronze Age in Mycenae and among the Celts; typographical signs; the twirling letters of the Medieval manuscripts; orbits of the spermatozoon carrying its chromosomes to unloose a man. . . .

August 27. A workman goes by carrying two heavy parcels; he is in a great hurry. A little boy and a little girl trot alongside, trying to keep up with him. The little boy has a fan in his hand, some wine merchant's advertisement. He is fanning his father with it very seriously, very tenderly. It has the design of a battle on it and a name that I can't read, beginning with a big O.

August 28. Drank a bottle of champagne at a friend's house. An unlively brew, trailing a faintly sugary after-taste. Good champagne is a sort of cat, a winged, white angora

cat with a pompom of foam on its tail. It jumps lightly on to the table and frolics for you. At the last glass it flies off, laughing loudly, through the hole the cork has made in the ceiling.

Money. News in Brief: Near Colmar a farmer killed his father, buried him and shared the eight-hundred francs his victim had in his pockets with his brothers.

The Greeks had two sorts of gold jewellery—the ornaments they wore and the ornaments the heirs of the dead put into the tombs. The dummy jewels were cut out of refuse gold leaf.

August 29. Erno Goldfinger, the architect, is back from a tour in England, Holland, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Everywhere, he says, except in a few rare instances, there is a great jealousy of France. It is obvious that we are trying to buy peace in Europe with our enormous national wealth. France considers that she has the right to do this because, compared with the universal vulgarity of to-day, her position is that of Ancient Greece, of Rome, at the least of Alexandria. All the same, her behaviour is in poor taste. *LIFE*. For the 'past month I have delayed finishing certain parts of my picture. I cannot bring myself to do them. I am subject to physical revulsions of this kind—sudden, unforeseeable, incoercible revulsions. A piece of work that I would have done cheerfully yesterday, to-day seems utterly disgusting. It should be said that, during these crises, I work hard at some other job. The "work morality" that I was taught as a child makes me a little ashamed of these fits of nausea. Furthermore I like things that are finished. To see and to know that any work of mine is still short of the best I can make of it, is as distressing to me as persistent disorder. Yet I know that suddenly, one day, I shall get down to it with extreme energy. Perhaps the delay is a tactical move on the part of one's secret being, a sign that it knows, maybe, that one would not work well at that particular task.

September 4. As a child I used to ask my mother or my grandmother every morning when they woke me: "What's it like out?" My eyes still turn, directly I open them, to the window and the place where the curtain is badly drawn.

From this small sample I judge of the coming day. Its colour influences my mood, hence my happiness.

In some jazz piece on the Wireless—did not notice its name—there was a curious passage: a very deep, strangely exciting voice sang for a moment and was silent again. I waited for the return of this singular effect; it is natural to wish to relive one's pleasure. But the strange, deep voice did not come back. The delight of desire contained, the subtleties of negroes to whom Beethoven is unknown. . . .

September 6. The car has not been out once since we got back from the cruise last year. To-day is the anniversary of our leaving Marseilles. At noon, a year ago, we steamed away. Marthe has decreed a day of rest. Things are a little tense at the moment. We went first, hoping for Bach, to hear the grand organ of Notre Dame. In this Gothic place the chief concern is Eternity. Following the theme, one would have liked the organ to go from loud and sublime clangours to vast silences. The architecture demands splendour, a music that would bring one to a heroic stature, making one's material and spiritual troubles by comparison small, and oneself so much the stronger. Dramatic affinities are helpful when one is in a dramatic mood. (At times there is a slight Germanic streak in me.) But no. The mighty organ whistles on its little flute. Tripping delicately, it frolics with a *vox angelica* that is Virgin Mary blue, archbishop mauve and plaster-saint pink. Pretty, insipid games that are quite out of keeping with the majestic sanctuary. Come now, organist, pull yourself together, be a little serious! A cathedral is not only a temple where believers pray, it is a place of rest and of exaltation, a clinic for every sufferer. You are cheating us with that fiddly twaddle. God blast it! Isn't there Couperin and his family and Buxtehude and Johann Sebastian Bach and his brood? You would think, the way he is carrying on now, that he fancies he is playing at the movies—he the famous organist who has a saint's name for a first name and, as if that were not enough, a saint's name for a surname too! But on he goes. Gently, gently, he caresses, sweetly, sweetly he

murmurs, softly he lets out his little farts and at the end gives us one fine crash just to show us he is earning his fee honestly, and so trots off to his Sunday chicken. . . .

To give our worries a good airing we went to the Eiffel Tower; two o'clock found us at the top of it. Fat clouds roll across an uncertain sky. From time to time a shower scores the blue. The sun, with truly princely partiality, sheds sudden beams upon the chief monuments of the city, singling them out and raising them to honour. Notre Dame, the Sacre Cœur, the Grands Magasins Dufayel, the Dome of the Invalides which is close by and its far-off echo the Val de Grace—one by one they step out and do their turn, then recede into the shadows. After a long search through the five-penny telescope, I make out, away towards Montrouge, in the misty distance, a tiny green stain, the meadows of the Montsouris reservoir that make my studio gay and green. That white speck is the gable of my house, a minute white sail on the blue sea of slates, beside a green lawn shore.

September 7. A morning of stupid failures, nothing that I do comes off. I find myself saying "Oh, of course! To-day's the day for that sort of thing. . . ."

An odd meteor-like formation has appeared in the heavens. The sky is cold and bright. Three fine white lines streak it boldly from top to bottom, like the blades of skates on new ice. Little by little the streaks swell into snowy clouds; soon the whole sky is overcast. Were they the lines of force of water condensing, or an invisible aeroplane?

The sun floats in a rainbow-coloured halo of pale, sad-looking clouds such as I had often seen in the Urals.

As it sets it paints a splendid skyline: lavender and salmon pink with great gusty sweeps of cloud.

Complete depression. When this happens I escape into the past. To escape into the future needs considerable strength. Exactly at this time last year I was talking to Mr. But on the steamer. I remember the conversation and will set it down to give me courage.

"You can say what you like," he said, "everything is fated,

everything is written. Didn't you learn that on your journey through Islam? The weather is fine, and presently we will die. Wisdom lies in renouncing everything but pleasure. Reason tells you so, and Reason is never wrong. Socrates! India! . . .” His pouting lips expressed profound disillusionment.

“Possibly, Sergius. But until we die our business is to live. And to serve. What I liked hearing in the Orient was the vigorous advice that the grand old deeds and the grand old masterpieces gave me. For masterpieces are essentially great deeds. Yes, dear But, I heard even Socrates say before he died:

‘If to die is to be without sensation, to lie as though in a deep, dreamless sleep, then to die is a marvellous boon. For, in my opinion, if any man were to choose out of all his nights that night when he had not dreamed one dream, and compared it with the other nights and days of his life, in order to discover which was the sweetest, he would have no hesitation in making up his mind on the matter. And I am speaking not only of you or me or any ordinary individual but of the Great King himself. Thus, if death is as I say, it is indeed a great gain, for after it there is nought but a long night.’

If that is not optimism, I don't know what you want!

“And please observe that you also, Mr. But the pessimist, with your belief in things being always beyond our powers, you are strangely optimistic in believing in the supremacy of Reason, since you imagine that Reason can provide you with a certainty. Doesn't it strike you that you are being curiously inconsistent, curiously contradictory?

“Come now! Civilisation is no longer in the Orient. Islam has made the Orient pessimistic. Its people are lost in a long, unhappy, resigned sleep. Some of them—India, China, Japan, Russia—are waking up now. They have accepted the lesson of the West, which is activity, and the West has accepted the lesson of the ancient East, the will to progress.

“Your pseudo-Eastern wisdom, which is quite out of date,

consisted in believing that life was empty and useless, and in having the courage, the completely sterile courage, to do nothing at all. The greatness of the West consists in having the pluck to undertake an adventure, to run a risk, without the promise of a heavenly reward, without the promise of personal gain, in the hope of attaining some good. The finest European minds are well aware that the greatest acts of man are infinitesimally small if you measure them by the Infinite that spreads about us, that grows as the desert grows with each higher step we take. They see man's weakness as plainly as the most pessimistic Oriental can see it. But they see also the grandeur of an action done by a man who knows that in the face of death he is but a bubble of vanity, a nothingness, yet nevertheless performs that action because he thinks that it is good. Action, seen in this light, is stoicism, an active, social, effective, useful stoicism."

"You are incorrigible," said Sergius and promptly darted off, leaving me.

He came back a moment later, tripping comically in his richly embroidered golden Turkish slippers that are much too big for him. To prevent them from running ahead, he trotted in the Chinese manner. He was carrying with the utmost care an absurd miniature hookah in pink alabaster, streaked with mauve, that he had bought in the Smyrna bazaar and incorrectly called a chibook in order to be in the picture.

"My chibook shall be my councillor," he said. "I will put it on the mantelpiece. It will remind me that all effort is vain, if by chance I am tempted to make one. . . ."

He draped the green rubber tube tenderly about his neck, crushed a cigarette into the little container, arranged the cushions, dug his toes into his slippers, assumed an elegant attitude, lit the tobacco and began to smoke. His air was of a man enjoying paradisiac delights. Soon his face went green. He dropped the green tube smartly, ran to the rails and became profoundly interested in the sea. He had scented the water of hookah with some Grasse rose-water, made in

Germany and bought in Damascus. He was also very proud of that. The sea-air was invaded by a smell of hair-oil . . .¹

When the poor man had been restored to a normal colour, I said:

"Of course it is true that every action has its consequences. But it is difficult to believe that Fate had foreseen from all eternity that you would smoke that little whatnot in order that your philosophy should bring nourishment and profit to a few fish. It is unlikely that 'everything' should be 'written', and all 'wisdom' is not wise."

September 10. He said that the word was choleric; she said that it was choleros. They both fell into a violent rage.

September 13. The Schneider Cup. Italian, French and English aviators are competing in a hydroplane speed test. Only the English were ready. The Wireless relay brought us the vigorous humming of the 2,300 flying horses making their fine record: 342 miles an hour in a circular flight. The same evening Lieutenant Stainforth flew at 381½ miles an hour in a straight line.²

You folk of 1951, compare that marvellous 1931 aeroplane that cost several million francs, with one of the tiny ancient coins from Sicily, or Egina, or Athens, that love of art has put into the numismatists' cases. You will see at once that only art survives. Who, in 1951, will give one Greek obolus for the out-of-date machine?³ Yet one obolus was enough to soften

¹ *Note 1934.* "The Oriental Hookah for use with the 'Nirvana' cigarette can be smoked in several ways. (a) With pure water. Pour the water through one or other of the orifices, taking care to fill the lower bowl only. In this manner the smoke is denicotinised and loses its bitterness. (b) With the 'Nirvana' scent specially prepared by Messrs. B. . . of Paris. In this manner the distilled and denicotinised smoke absorbs the aroma of the scent and spreads it abroad. (c) With any kind of liqueur. In this manner the distilled and denicotinised smoke becomes blended with the fumes of the liqueur and so gives the smoker the illusion of inhaling a narcotic, whereas in fact he is only inhaling alcohol. (d) With any drink, provided it has a strong flavour, such as coffee, strong tea, etc. The result is a combination of (a) and (b). The Nirvana Oriental hookahs are sold in various colours. A woman of taste will choose one to match her frock."

² *Note 30th Sept. 1931.* Stainforth 410 miles per hour.

April 1933. Agello (Italy) 426½ miles per hour.

Oct. 1934. Agello (Italy) 433 miles per hour with the same machine.

Note 1937. The race has not taken place since.

11th Nov. 1937. Wurster (Germany) 381½ miles per hour.

³ *Note 1935.* The 'plane in question is now at the Science Museum in South Kensington. It looks quite all right, but it is not worth a thousand francs.

the heart of Charon. The greatest passion for mythology cannot make us believe that Hell's high functionary could be bought for so small a bribe. The point is that the Greek obolus was beautiful and that no doubt Charon was sensitive, as the Greeks were, to beauty. The ordinary individual can never understand certain sequences of events; he explains everything in terms of ha'pennies. Of course money sometimes helps one to success, just as a pinch will help a bud to open. But no more than that. At least I should like to think there was no more in it than that. . . .

September 15. Fine but freezing. There have been no flies at all this year.

Visit to the Roman rooms at the Louvre. An inscription on a bust reads: *Apollonia du Pont*. This means, being interpreted, that here is the head of a woman found at Apollonia in Pontus.

An American visitor stops, much impressed, and says to his wife:

"See that? Madame Apollonia Dupont!"

Perhaps he thinks he has found an ancestress and a grand genealogical tree?

In a dark corner, beneath the interested gaze of Messalina, two lovers are kissing each other on the lips. A good Capuchin friar who is going by turns his head the other way, tightens the rope round his waist and put his hand to his rosary.

Half an hour in the Tuileries with Le Nôtre. To westward Paris looks as though it were cut out of an aventurine. The clouds, constant victims of the wind, yield to their persecutor. They scatter, leaving fragments of themselves, like regrets, behind them.

September 17. The newspapers are giving us to understand that the sailors of the *Nelson*, the *Rodney*, the *Hood*, the *Malaya*, the *Repulse*, the *Warspite*, the *Valiant*, together with four cruisers, have "gone on strike", "suspended duty", "protested", "made representations", "put forward claims", etc., etc. Every journalist invents some new and remarkable euphemism for the word mutiny. Some of them do not even mention this "incident" that is indeed unique in the history

of the British Navy. Orders have been issued to stop manoeuvres and to recall the ships to port. The cause of it is apparently a reduction in pay. A very dramatic affair; like the "Potemkin", but milder.¹

September 18. Depression. The real "everything is useless" feeling. There is no matter that is everlasting; the hardest metals evaporate finally into waves; the most "eternal" bronzes endure only for a few centuries. Loss of self-confidence? My courage has gone. The present time discourages everything but a small, mean view of life.

September 22. The Japanese troops have occupied Mukden. At an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet, held yesterday evening in London, the British Government has taken measures to save the pound. The Stock Exchange is to be closed from to-day. Yesterday the franc was at a hundred to the pound.² To sum up: On the 15th the Atlantic Fleet rebelled. On the 16th Gandhi asked for "the complete, unconditional independence of India". On the 22nd the House of Commons voted the abandonment of the gold standard. The pillars of gold are falling. This is the end of State honesty; England has done everything in her power to keep her financial promises, yet she, too, must go bankrupt with the other countries. It is rather demoralising. Yet what is happening will help in the coming of a new order.

Is action the raw material of Chance?

Very bright studios like mine are first-rate for work; you can see the slightest fault clearly. The strong light is not so good for seeing into oneself; where the senses are too sharply busy, the inner glimmers pass unnoticed. To-day for the first time I have brought "Love" (a sculptured group) close to the window, into the full blaze of day, and am satisfied that it stands up to it. I always begin my work in a dark corner. The dimness makes me fancy I have got something done and so encourages me to go on. Little by little, as the early uncertainties are resolved, I bring the stand or the easel

¹ *Note 1933.* The crew of the *Seven Provinces*, a Dutch cruiser, mutinies. The ship leaves Sumatra and is bombed by aeroplanes.

² Since 1936 the franc has been devalued how many times?

nearer to the window. When the work holds together in the full light, it is finished. And so it is also with the critical faculty: it should be exercised only in its own good time.

September 24. According to a correspondent of the *Daily Express* in Berlin, extraordinary precautions are being taken by the German authorities during M. Laval and M. Briand's visit.

"Five thousand police will guard the railroad from the frontier to the capital. An armed patrol will stand at every milestone. The stations will have especial surveillance. A running-light with three strong projectors will precede the train, lighting the rail at night-time. Twenty armed men will be on it. On the official train itself, moreover, the usual staff will be doubled and armed sentries will be on duty throughout the journey."

Charles Baudelaire:

". . . Great care should be taken of the actual materials of work. He (Delacroix) professes a fanatical love for cleanliness in his equipment and in all the preparations and elements of his work. This is easily understood. Painting being an art that requires deep reasoning and the immediate response and collaboration of a number of qualities, it is essential that when the hand starts its work it should encounter as few obstacles as possible, that it should be in a position to obey the divine orders of the brain slavishly. . . . The great artist is as swift in the execution of his pictures as he is slow, serious and conscientious in their conception. As a matter of fact he shares this characteristic with M. Ingres, who is popularly supposed to be his direct antithesis. Child-birth is not the whole of child-bearing. These two lords of painting who both seem so lazy, display an amazing agility when it comes to covering a canvas."

September 28. *Paris Midi*:

"The Bourse quotations reveal nothing at the moment but the horror of the world's capitalists in face of the

collapse of the pound sterling. The fall of a currency as universally respected as the pound has shaken what was to them a fundamental dogma. It has provoked a panic that must be allowed to pass.”¹

The great French Bank, the B.N.C., is in difficulties. Gandhi's attention has been drawn to the unemployment brought about in Lancashire by his boycotting of English cotton goods. It is said that the “balance of his soul was not disturbed”.

September 30. To foresee the coming turn of political and social events one must get well into the skin of the situation. A man who owes money to the tax-collector, to his landlord, his baker, his banker, his mistress, hopes, secretly or openly, for a cataclysm, for some catastrophe that would rid him of his obligations and his distresses—a war, a revolution, even an increase of the existing trouble which, by forcing the State to take general measures of safety, would give relief to the individual debtor. This is undoubtedly the position of the majority of people in Germany, Italy, England, in America and even here. All very promising. I myself know a number of excellent men, law-abiding fathers of families, who would not hesitate to set a war going if the lever of control were in their hands. Talk to them of a threat of war, especially if they are over fighting age; they will cover their faces with their hands. But between their fingers you will see in their eyes a gleam of hope.

October 4. Floods and famine in China.

A. E. Zischke in the *Intransigent*:

“The stricken regions are three times the size of France. Hien-Ning is an encampment built of bamboos and tent-canvas. Fifteen thousand refugees were living there—all peasants, men, women and children. The ration of rice was one handful a day for each family. The rice was only

¹ *Note April 1933.* “The Bourse quotations reveal nothing at the moment but the horror of the world's capitalists in face of the collapse of the dollar. The fall of a currency as universally respected as the dollar has shaken what was to them a fundamental dogma. It has provoked a new wave of panic that must be allowed to pass.”

available thanks to the gifts and the subscriptions raised in the spared cities. It was half-rotten . . . but was greedily devoured nevertheless. On the 21st of September doctors, visiting the camp, notified the presence of cholera. No remedy was possible; there was nothing to be done. A thousand men were removed to another camp at Pou-ki; a machine-gun was brought to Hien-Ning. On some pretext, the 14,000 who remained were gathered on to a wide plateau surrounded by water. It had one narrow issue, leading into the mountain. It was in this passage that the machine was set up. The gun opened fire and drove the 14,000 poor devils into the water."

The present time gives the lie to every proverb: Gold makes countries poor. Wheat is being burned in Canada. Ruin comes from the abundance of goods. The loyal British Navy is no longer loyal. The pound sterling is no longer worth a pound. The British Empire is no longer British. . . . As for our good little, fat little Income-Daddies, they don't worry.

October 7. The heads of all States are on the run: Brüning and Curtius to Paris; Laval and Briand to Berlin; Lord Reading to Paris; Laval to New York; Grandi and Brüning to America; Briand to Geneva, etc. etc. The Laval Ministry has broken a record, the long-distance record for any official journey. Laval: 12,500 miles, Reynaud 20,625 miles.

In New York President Hoover makes further solemn pronouncements on the need of co-operation and mutual aid among the nations. Capital is having convulsions; the politician-doctors are completely helpless. Yes. That is just about it.

October 8. The sun was shining upon Paris. From the North come great cirrus clouds, spreading their serene white fans over the blue sky. Lovely landscapes floating in Space . . . Looking at them, the painter forgets the future, the anguish that will soon be here. But the meteorologist knows that the graceful clouds are of ice, needles of ice, and mean that the weather is about to break. They say that there is too much gold in France and that the excessive gold is disastrous for

business. I must believe them. . . . The English and the Germans say that gold should be redistributed. Certainly. Don't mind us. Think of the artists. Apparently there is another solution, which would be to do away with the gold standard altogether. The painters and the intellectuals have been saying for some time that the gold standard is castrated. Meanwhile, unless a miracle happens, there is the rent and the coal-bill. The economic wolf growls. The men who fancied that their troubles would soon be over were fools.

So one should give up painting? Yes. That is the advice I should give, sincerely and fervently, to every man who *can* give up painting. The monstrous inflation that took place in the arts as a result of the general financial chaos, was bound to end at the stabilisation. It did so, sure enough, within a few weeks. The world crisis that followed aggravated the artist's position and will continue to aggravate it for many long months yet. The only possible procedure is for those who scamped their work—there are still a lot of them—to do it *carefully* instead of over-producing. Their last miserable excuse, which was money, has gone. They should put their energies into improving their work, raising it to the true level of French painting with its tradition of deep thought and loving execution. Art would gain by it. And so would the artists, for only really accomplished pictures can hope, nowadays, to rouse a desire to possess them. It is for the artists to awaken this desire. There are signs everywhere that people are growing sick of the slipshod.

I believe that I have always been extremely thorough in my work. Yet, if times were not so hard I should have sent "Love" to be cast a long while ago. The group is still in the studio; every now and then I give it a finishing touch. In the long run it may be to art's advantage that canvases and paints and bronze and marble should all have gone up in price. . . . One must find one's consolations as best one can. . . .

October 14. On the Underground the ends of the carriages are rounded; the windows are fitted to the curve. In the concave glass, as we were passing through a dark tunnel, I

saw the reflection of a superb woman's profile and turned to look at it. I must have made an odd grimace, for what I saw was an uncommonly plain female with a beak like a parrot's. The bend of the glass had corrected the deplorable protuberance. Alas! how beautiful she was in the distorting mirror. . . .

Since the beginning of October the woman-of-fashion has been wearing hair that is the colour of light straw, of thatch paled by winter rains and frosts. Very pretty for one night.

October 22. The meadows on the Reservoir outside my windows are on a sharp slope. I am so accustomed to them that I forget how abrupt they are. It seems natural to see the hens and the cats of the neighbourhood in action, climbing boldly up and down the precipice like flies on a painted landscape. For the last few days a gardener with an enormous and wobbly behind has been cutting the high grasses and the young sycamores that have installed themselves without official authority on our municipal domain. He wields his sickle carefully. Owing to the trembling, gelatinous mass that he carries at his rear, his balance is extremely unsteady; the mass is quite uncontrollable; he is terrified of being carried down the slope. This morning he brought a piece of rope with him to put round his waist and a mate to hold the end of the rope. But he still seemed terrified. What if the rope snapped? This afternoon the mate is doing the cutting and the fat behind is holding the rope. It makes the perfect counter-weight: the right man in the right place.

The delicate autumn sunshine makes the shadows of the bushes and the shrubs bright blue. The Persian colours of the cock warm the air. His crest is like a poppy to the eye; his cry is the ear's translation of its scarlet. Cockledoodledo red. The stupid white hens reflect the light well and do their oviparous job conscientiously. Standard sparrows, lively and squawking, are having a game fluttering from one tall grass to another; they scarcely bend the stalks as they go. They are daring and familiar; the black cat and its white waistcoat does not frighten them at all. Which is their great mistake. The cat jumps and misses a fat one. She misses it by a hair's breadth

and topples down the slope. She had counted on the sparrow's weight to steady her. She pulls herself together and looks round to see if anyone is watching. Catching sight of me, she is deeply vexed. She jumps, jumps, jumps and hop! rolls down the hill on purpose. "You see? I'm playing at falling!" After that she assumes a wild excitement and bounds fantastically over the grass after a butterfly. The butterfly settles on a leaf of parsley. The cat stands on her hind legs and spears it with her claw. Sitting up, very erect, she examines its bright painted colours attentively, looking like a landscape painter with his palette on his thumb. Satisfied that her little comedy has convinced me, she drops her meditative pose, nibbles for form's sake at the butterfly and goes airily off as though I did not exist.

October 24. Signs and Symbols. A workman has been putting lines of green paint on the edge of the pavement round every big tree of the avenue. I presume that the greenness, colour of plants and of hope, is intended to indicate the trees that are to be kept. I have noticed before that the Council workmen paint red lines round the trees that are condemned to death—a very proper meaning for the colour. The fact is significant in the study of the origin of symbols. We are naturally inclined to choose as symbol the shape and the colour that directly expresses the idea we wish to convey. To-day it seems, for want of red paint, the conventional meaning of the colour is reversed; they are cutting down the big tree that is near my house. There are two kinds of symbols, the indirect, which is conventional, and the direct, which is imperative. Painters, of course, should use only the direct symbols. I won't insist any further.¹

October 28. No ideas at all these days. The weather is cold and dark, dirty-looking. A painful lack of the particular excitement that comes to one, not from one's own depths but from the outside, from a fine day, from the blueness of the sky. In the avenue the workmen are still cutting down the trees. The earth, exhausted by fifty years of generation, is being borne away in dust-carts. Vans are bringing young, fresh

¹ *Art*, p. 237.

earth. The new soil, the preparations for the growth of young trees, are the only gay, future-regarding actions that have come my way this week. The winter is indeed beginning gloomily, without one rift in the sky, one bright patch of hope. The League of Nations has shown itself moribund; it has been unable to check Japan and it has not dared to impose sanctions. This is the full stop to our old dream of a freely chosen, freely acknowledged United States of Europe. The dream even seems out-of-date now and a little silly. Needless to say Laval's journey to America has had no results whatever.¹

It is clear that France is entirely isolated; it is unanimously agreed that she is responsible for the swamp we have all got into. The leitmotif of all foreign Governments is: "Armaments are the chief cause of the present confusion. France, by refusing to disarm, keeps alive the fear of war. She must be compelled to disarm. When she has done so, trust will revive and the happiness of the world will be reborn."

There must be something else besides: whatever is preventing our mechanised world from working properly should be destroyed. In Russia they are at least trying a new method. In the West . . . England: 167 Conservative gains at the General Election; France: old fogeys and a too cunning Laval. . . . Is that enough? One shivers at the thought of it. And one must go on painting. It is not easy.

November 7. Second lecture tour in Germany this year.

The Roman churches here are exquisite. Rome came to Cologne. So did we. During the War French bombs were dropped on a procession of girls coming out of San Georg. Ten were killed. Our guns and our 'planes did not go for the German steel factories but for Cologne, whose sympathies were on our side. Soldiers have their own ideas about these things. Unless the idea came from the steel owners to whom steel is the supreme Lord.

¹ This was an extremely important moment—the moment when the world put her stake on unhappiness and won. From the surrender of the League of Nations everything else followed: the abominable business in Abyssinia, the atrocious war in Spain, Japan's second invasion of China. Since that moment, the predatory nations have held the threat of war over the world. We have waited for war year by year, month by month, hour by hour. . . .

The crisis is ascribed here partly to France and partly to the machines, with the result that liking for France and for machinery is declining.

Industrial Rhineland has something of the separatist spirit of Catalonia. Hardworking people, their countries' chief source of wealth, they feel that the Governments of Berlin and of Madrid fleece them and are rebellious in consequence.¹

France has an Ambassador at Munich, a Consul-General at Cologne.

Spent the whole morning at the huge Gunther-Wagner works: "Pelikan" fountain-pens, inks and colours. One might say that the Pelikan is Germany's greatest art-producer; colossal quantities of paint issue from its belly. And in spite of the crisis the works continue to grow. Presently they will be unable to sell their goods and will cry out that the Allies are stifling them. For once that will not be true.

The youngest of the B. . . . children, a boy of six, says jokingly to his big sister: "If you're not good we'll set our Frenchman on you!"

So we have become the ogres. Every Frenchman is looked upon as fiercely warlike. I heard the boy's mother say:

"He isn't a Napoleon. He is a friend of Germany."

At the dinner-table he sets up his napkin-ring on a knife-

¹ *Note June 1932. Zürcher Zeitung*: "The combined action of the three Presidents of Southern Germany in their approach of President Hindenburg has shown, more quickly than was expected, that the people of South Germany must be reckoned with. In the present situation the Southern people form, as they have done at other times, a rampart against the extreme development of the Prussian policy and the dangers that may result from Hitler's party coming into power in Berlin. At no time since the War has the idea of independence appealed so strongly to the South." According to diplomatic custom, Bavaria has no legation in Paris yet there is a French plenipotentiary at Munich. The Comte d'Ormesson is a living proof that Paris attached considerable importance to the place. When the conflict between the Reich and Bavaria became so acute that war seemed imminent, that war would in fact have broken out if the Reich had sent a Commissioner to Bavaria as it did to Prussia, Bavaria felt that France's support was as important to her as the Vatican's.

PS. February 1933. Hitler has been made Chancellor of the Reich. Bavaria is considering the election of a Bavarian Chief of State, probably the ex-Crown Prince Rupert of Wittelsbach.

PPS. March 1933. This has not come off. Hitler has made General Von Epp, one of Prince Rupert's late officers, Commissioner of the Reich at Munich. I heard the "joy and deliverance" speeches that same evening on the wireless. Hitler has finished Bismarck's work and has united Germany. The Foreign Office has been tricked.

rest and pointing it at me goes: "Boom-boom-boom!" Nearly everyone says that "France is now what Germany was before the War, an imperialistic, militarist nation. You were right to fight us in 1914. Now you deserve to be fought."

November 14. Left Hanover for Hamburg. In the train a troop of scouts, male and female, were singing in chorus, "Hamburg! Harmonia! Hamburg! Harmoniaaaaa!" unceasingly, hour after hour. The smallest of them had tickets round their necks. The rule on the railways here is that children travelling at the reduced rates must be labelled like sheep.

Saw the immense new workers' cities. They are comfortable but lugubrious. Gaiety should always be considered an essential part of comfort.

"See the harbour! One hour on the Elbe!" A huge river. Carcasses of huge floating docks, huge yards, huge ships, huge and lovely Hamburg with its streamlined stern. . . . A number of dismantled steamers. Our commercial attaché tells me that traffic is not a tenth of what it was in 1914. The guide who is looking after us on our little river steamer calls out the destinations of the big ships through a megaphone as we pass by: America, Japan, England, Africa, U.S.S.R., a complete geography lesson. Two modern four-masters, the *Sundwall* and the *Pamir*, of Hamburg. Before a big French cargo-boat, the *Picardy*, the speaker's voice grows dull with anger and with weariness: "France . . ." An immense melancholy hangs over the people and the place. The sleepy half-stagnant harbour yawns. Soon it will fall wholly asleep in the yellow mist, with the setting, fog-stifled sun. Not a sound of riveting, that laughter of great ports.

Lecture at Hanover. A number of people were sorry, it appears, because I did not show them the "latest art novelties from Paris". They want recipes so that they can be in the swim.

The foreigners who admire our advance-guard painters and try to copy them complain that we do not change quickly or often enough. Everything here is snobbery and fashion. A lot of Berlin women have suddenly become Greta Garbos; the only cigarette you may smoke is *Rot und Weiss*. In Berlin

snobbishness is more prevalent, fashions are followed more eagerly than in Paris, but the fashions themselves pass more quickly in art, literature, philosophy, politics.

As you get out of the train you are asked: "Have you read W . . ., heard X . . ., seen Z . . ., smoked Y . . .? Very 'considerable'. Quite wonderful! Marvellous!" Six months later if you enquire after the famous stars, the perfect cigarettes, they stare at you: "What are you talking about?"

Their blank expression suggests that you are almost painfully out of date. Novelties must prove they are alive; they can only do so by enduring. . . .

In my lectures I insisted on the following points: There are plenty of us on both sides who are anxious for an agreement, but the two countries have an entirely wrong idea of each other, a much too abstract idea. We talk, for example, of "The Frenchman", "The German". Yet even in Germany the Northerners are as unlike the Southerners as the Northern French are unlike the Provençals. Differences are not taken into account, there is too much idealisation whether in the good direction or the bad, and so no true link is formed. It is the same where young people marry "for love"; the girl weds "her dream".

Awakened this morning by a mighty humming; recognised the organ sound of a Zeppelin. I had heard it before, during the War, in Paris. Ran to the window to see the splendid machine sail slant-wise across the courtyard, bending the square corner of the sky as one used to bend visiting-cards.

On foot through the lovely Tiergarten. In a deserted alley a woman walks by herself pushing an empty perambulator. On the pillow lies a man's green felt hat with a tuft of feathers in it.

A member of the Franco-German economic commission tells me that "they are going to propose a Customs Agreement to be established gradually in five to ten years. If France accepts, it will mean the salvation of German industry and the first steps to political understanding. If she refuses, then her intentions will be clear. She will have deliberately condemned Europe to bankruptcy. Hence to war." Always their same

threat of turning everything to political ends. At heart they are still hoping for some sensational event that will bring back prosperity. They are mystics. . . .

The worst part of Germany is undoubtedly the new mode of behaviour in commercial matters. As a result of the successive crises and inflations, all engagements are held to be essentially revocable. You make a contract. It is enough for the month to change and behold a "new fact" has been introduced and your contract lapses. I am scarcely exaggerating. The methods used in foreign policy have come into private practice. Business men who are eager to do business often sign undertakings knowing that they cannot keep them. Later they try to discover ways of avoiding the unfavourable consequences of the agreement while keeping all its advantages. Directly a paper is signed the customer becomes an adversary and is treated as such; the customer, whether German or foreign, grows anxious. All this contributes to the general paralysis of trade. Bankruptcy is almost lawful, at all events quite honourable: an innocent business wile.

November 19. By train to Nuremberg. Saw again, with renewed horror, the great "Leuna-Werke" nitrogen factory, at Bitterfeld, twenty-five miles from Bayreuth-Wagner.¹ Here is Iena, made famous by Napoleon. On the station platform the headlines of the newspapers announce: "Great Japanese offensive in Manchuria."

Nuremberg. Went to bed early. Woke early. The drawn curtains disclose a fresh young new-born sky, a shimmering blue, happy in its gay innocence. The roofs are white with hoar-frost and fringed with tiny icicles. A few clouds leap, whipped by the lively wind, as though they were kids leaping from pointed gable to pointed gable. Pigeons are fluttering among the thousand sharp places of the roofs. Sand fleas do the same on the Gothic skeletons of stranded whales. All Gothic

¹ Chaminade in *Paris-Midi*, 11th July 1936: "Leuna, capital city of chemical death. . . . Ninety miles from Berlin, behind walls that bristle with electric wires, stands the formidable citadel of Nitrogen and Gas. Even the best cameras cannot take pictures of it; the air is saturated with rays and emanations that make all photographic plates useless."

buildings are skeletons when the air and the light does not stretch the morning's pink flesh over them, or the night's shrouds.

Visited the town. The Great Market Hall, centre of the world's hop trade. The hops have ruined many of the merchants this year; they have fallen to a third of their last year's price. Went up to the old Castle whence the Hohenzollerns started out to conquer the Imperial throne. Majestic German eagles stretch their painted wings over the heavy gates like night-birds crucified upon the doors of barns. The lyric force of the great heraldic symbols, conveyed directly by the sheer power of the images, is very strong. Will the Germans ever forget the poem, the grandiose ideal they built about their eagle-emperors?

The pear-trees and their lime-washed trunks stand in the moat, meditating. They are meditating a revolt, I think, for the autumn morning smells of spring. The castle has the complexion of a child. In the old days our wooden toys were born in Nuremberg. They were so delicate that we used to picture Nuremberg as a pretty village with old men in clogs carving bits of wood on the doorsteps of their Gothic cottages. In fact Nuremberg has been one of the big cities of Germany since the Middle Ages. To-day it is the centre of a great industry, Siemens-Schuckert, Miehle, etc. It has 415,000 inhabitants if you include its neighbour and one-time rival Furth. Seen from the Castle front the houses fill the whole of the vast landscape. Nuremberg and Furth are now a single city. Each tried to be bigger than the other and yet distinct from the other; their ambitions made them so great that they became one. If only Europe could do the same. . . .

Lecture. The mayor of the town was present. A sympathetic social-democrat audience. Hitler is going to lecture in this same hall in a day or two.

November 21. Visited the Wurzburg Tiepolos. How restful these foolishly useless things are after a fortnight of factory-ridden Germany where nothing but material needs are considered, where, in spite of the crisis, the love of comfort, of luxury, grows daily, where the producers heap the markets with new commodities, advertising them in such a way as to

create new needs, thereby making the men who buy the new things poorer, forcing those who cannot afford them to borrow, and generally increasing the inflation of credit. Where will all this lead? Hitler is waiting for them. Yet everyone says he is a clown and will never succeed.

A beggar at a church door holds out his torn wrist. "Krieg! Verdoun!" Nearly every book-shop has a large conspectus showing the military strength of the world. A huge French soldier towers above a tiny German infantry-man. A huge tricolour aeroplane fills one entire space; the next space, reserved for Germany's air power, is empty. "Deutschland Flügel Kein." "Germany has no aeroplanes." This is probably not quite true. Christmas is approaching. Angels, Father Christmasses with white tow beards, smile in the borax snow of the shop-windows. At every angle of the ancient streets a Virgin stands in her niche.

November 22. You enter Heidelberg by way of a pink sandstone gate, pink churches, pink houses, two more pink churches, a tunnel. A bronze gentleman in a bronze frock-coat, twice life-size, declaims in the middle of an elegant amphitheatre. On his right and on his left, two naked figures wriggle with pleasure at his discourse. The station has twenty-six pairs of railway lines. Not so pink. Are they meant to carry the students to their famous University? In 1914 the frontier was not very far away. It has come closer since the "recovered provinces" have been joined to France.

After the mountain comes the plain,
After the storm there'll be fine weather,
After you've drunk to the Moon, boys,
You must drink to the rising Day.
Beyond the Rhine god's leaping waves
There is our fine Lorrain-ai-ne.
Come along, boys! Come along, boys!
To Paris, to Paris, to Paris.

This is not the translation of a student's song; it is the automatic song that the train sings, that the twenty-six strategic

railway lines sing to me to the train's rhythm. How men love the Rhine! We, the French and the Germans, ought to get on well together since we worship the same river god with the same passion. But love brings jealousy; without love there would be no crimes of passion.

High-tension poles stride gloomily across the hinterland of Mannheim. Then we come to the Rhine. A lot of work is going on here, widening the bridge. The great river flows smoothly below. We are nearly at Kaiserslautern. On the rocks of the railway cutting someone has written in large white letters:

HITLER WILL WIN
HITLER WILL SAVE US
YOUTH AND THE SWASTIKA WILL TRIUMPH

"Nonsense!" exclaims my neighbour, a German who speaks very good French. "Childish twaddle. . . ."

The mountains subside. In the great plain the houses are painted half in one colour, half in another. Here is individualism and the sense of property. "I live in the green half, Fritz in the pink."¹ A *Bismarck Turm*. We are running into the occupied Saar. Meditation on the so-called rights of conquest. Am interrupted by an official of the Currency Department. The courteous German examines my pocket-book: "Is that all?" and hands it back to me with a smile and a look of slight astonishment. Are not all Frenchmen rich?

The last villages before Saarbrücken. A little cemetery. A lot of people are on the road, going to pay their respects to the dead or coming back from them. They call out to each other cheerfully. It is nearly dinner-time, a happy, intimate time. The golden sun is setting; there is a good dish simmering on the stove; there will be the Frankfort wireless to listen to. . . .

Stations always display every sort of poster and notice but never their own names. According to the railway guide this is Forbach, that was the revenge for Iena, that Verdun

¹ Note 1936. In London also neighbouring houses are seldom painted alike. Sometimes where they are semi-detached the columns of the doors, the very chimney-stacks and drain-pipes are sharply divided into two parts.

revenged. Look out for the revenge of Verdun! A number of gentlemen climb in carrying portfolios, busy as ants, spectacled and smiling. They smile to the right, they smile to the left. Quite automatic. Their voices are the fat, familiar voices of official tub-thumpers. "They nearly broke all the bones in my hand," one of them says, "they shook it so much!" I am told that he is a French nationalist deputy.

Leaving Saint Avold I had a talk with a tailor from Metz. "The Saar is a wash-out," he said.¹ And: "We daren't work with the Germans. They'll sign anything, but they never keep their word."

My tailor friend is very proud of having dressed Monsieur de Wendel. He is the only man I spoke to in the Saar, yet the name of the rich iron-master must needs come into the conversation.

Metz. A swarm of young soldiers and their girls, real Paris sparrows. The young women came on Saturday to see their men, and are going back to-day. Their little size strikes one after the big Easterners. They kiss and say good-bye gaily.

"Good-bye, my boy," says an old man. A mother calls out: "See you soon, Roland!" But indeed our Rolands are small compared with the Medieval Rolands whose enormous hieratic statues tower above the German towns. The Parisian people are a gay, pleasing people. At the first glance they seem frivolous. Their general education is certainly very inferior to that of the Germans. But a sound instinct takes its place in every case where actual information is not required. In serious matters the Frenchman never exaggerates the "moral conflict" aspect: his traditional impulses save him from prolonged introspection: he reacts traditionally. To the Protestant German, trained to debate every moral point critically, life is a permanent case of conscience. The conclusions that he reaches in the course of his self-examinations are somewhat risky: dialectic does not invariably lead us to the good, it is frequently used to give a moral air to immorality. For example,

¹ On the 13th January 1935 the Saar plebiscite gave: 48,637 against union with Germany and 477,119 in favour.

the Frenchman is unfaithful to his wife as a rooster is unfaithful to his hen; it is his rooster's right so to do. But a German finds good reasons for the same act, by specious arguments he persuades himself that it is his duty. The Frenchman's fixed principles help him to avoid casuistry, prevent him from altering his political or moral views according to the interests of the moment. His sense of reality saves him from taking theories for facts and every passing goose of fashion for a swan.

Onville is fitted out as though for war. In the signal-boxes the lights are camouflaged with blue paint; one of them has a big blackboard on which the position of every train on the entire system is marked by a string of tiny lamps.

Lérrouville. Next door a remarkably drunk soldier—such as you never see in Germany where soldiers are invisible and drunkenness is not tolerated—sings over and over again: "I am of Lorraine! I am of Lorraine! I'm of Lorrai-ai-ai-ne!" He accompanies the tune with his bottle, drawn backwards and forwards over his forearm like a fiddle bow.

I light a cigarette. The tricolour match-box comes from Saarbrücken. On one of its sides is the terrible "Gueule Cassée" of the Debt. There is no sign of the War in Germany except a few demolished forts in the Rhineland. The War to them is a page of history that was botched—the less said about it the better. If they think of war, they think of the next one. For us 1914 was an unforgettable tragedy. There are a thousand signs, great and small, that show that the French point of view took definite shape in 1918, perhaps in 1870. Germany would like to wind up the business and get forward with something else. We give them the feeling that we are for ever going backwards. They are not so very far wrong.

Conclusions. We are, at the moment, the turning point of every German's thought. We are envied; we are looked upon as the dictators of Europe, cause of all hatreds, hopes, despairs. A few profound, admiring friendships remain to us . . . but everyone believes that, if France willed it, this November 1931 would be Germany's spring. They fancy that we are all rich as the Banque de France. Germany,

passionate lover of work and of enterprise, considers that she has a right to work and a right to prosperity as the reward of work. She considers that France is deliberately paralysing the movements of a great nation. At every hint of a slackening of tension a mad enthusiasm breaks out, followed by blackest disappointment. No resignation whatsoever: "It can't go on. It can't go on!" I remember in 1913 and 1914 all the commercial men, the manufacturers and their friends in the Press were crying: "It can't go on!" Not too reassuring. A recurring cycle. . . .

Since 1918 Germany has been looking for a saviour. She has gone from one fetish to another, always hoping for a miracle. She has believed in Italy, in the Soviets, in England, in Hoover, in Briand. Now she is turning to Hitler who will give her, she thinks, a happy renaissance and every form of wealth. Hitler, of course, cannot clear up the incompatibilities of the work-capital-machine tangle. The wildness of the pretender's promises should discredit him sooner or later. For this reason I feel that we are making too much of the danger that he would be to us if he came into power. Brüning, the Chancellor is a high-minded man; he is supposed to represent Germany. But he may fall to-morrow. I am sorry for the French diplomats.

I think that the people are demoralised enough to be drawn into any folly, but too demoralised to carry on a long war successfully at present. For a good many years now the courage of despair has led them only to take the easy way out—bankruptcy, moral or financial.

If Communism came, the revolution would no doubt touch the East Germans first. A form of separation might not be impossible. An enlarged, federal Rhineland might take shape. It would have the support of the rich West-German manufacturers who are anxious to keep their privileges intact, and the help of France, who would be glad to encourage division; and to break Communism.

The two irreducible problems at the moment are:

Were the Customs Restrictions removed, Germany's immense power of production would be a serious rival to

French industry. Union cannot be firmly established until the contradictions of national and international competition are done away with by Socialism.

The Germans have grown to hate all legal ties. They fulfil their public obligations unwillingly; they repudiate their private contracts lightly; the law does not take sufficient account, they feel, of changed conditions. In reality, one day has never been exactly like its predecessor. It is Bergsonism in business. France, on the other hand, always takes her stand upon the law in its most fixed, dry and narrow aspect. A close understanding will remain impossible so long as commercial and industrial Germany does not rediscover a morality based on a general respect for the inviolability of contracts, whatever the cost. The two partners must play the same game. But our duty—and our immediate moral and practical interest—is to make the game easier for them. And we are doing precisely the opposite. Our pernickety insistence on the letter of the law is making all Law odious. And we are hindering them economically.

I expected to go through Nancy but I find that the train is taking a new route, Lérrouville–Chalons–Bar-le-duc, that saves over thirty-five miles. France also has been working furiously at her approach to the frontier. She has, moreover, built immense fortifications. The Germans say they are impassable and protest loudly against them, asking why we continue to keep up an armed strength that is “superfluous, hence aggressive”. But what effect does our General Staff think a line of fortresses will have on a bombing air army?

November 23. Paris. A smart little Peugeot is standing empty by the sidewalk. A tow-haired woman pauses, and looks at the car with a longing smile. She walks on, comes back, makes a show of getting into the car, acts, all by herself, the graceful appearance she would present in it. She goes off regretfully, at last, her eyes still dreaming, her head still turning back. At the corner she stops for a last, loving look. Oh! for four little wheels to fit to one’s body! . . . The car industry will be the last to slacken off.

November 25. I am almost satisfied with the blues in *LIFE*. I have just brought them down a little. Sir John Lubbock has said that blue is the favourite colour of bees. Every dealer will tell you that the pictures that sell best are those in which sky blue predominates. It is easy to laugh at the public's taste for this tender shade. It might be wiser to see it as a significant "constant" and to try and discover its meaning. The wall there, close to me, if I paint it blue it will be entirely changed, it will seem to grow into a peaceful infinity. Blue is colour's third dimension, its mystic dimension. For it is perspective. And space, whether real or seeming, has the power to induce in us the serenity that we always need. Especially to-day.

But there are blues and blues. The blueness of the washer-woman's bag and of our paint-tubes' ultramarine are so absolutely blue they yell at you that they are matter. Traps never admit that they are traps; if they did, they could not deceive you. If you make a circle of your finger and look through it at a patch of Corot sky, you will see instantly what it is and to what point its reality differs from its appearances. The greyish blob, because it is beside an ochre tone, becomes an airy brightness, and the sky, which is only virtually blue, transforms the dirty ochre smudge into Provençal bricks steeped in sunshine. The interchange of the two colours gives us the illusion of reality, a mirage so vivid that it fills us with a swallow's bliss and away we fly, full tilt, into the illusory blue, away to the Castle of the Popes and over it, away to Ventoux, away into the paradise of the blue angels of light. Yet they are only scraps of unclean dust stuck on to a piece of calico.

It is the same with fables. The most fabulous of fables is infinitely less amazing than reality, for the fable has logic of a sort, even if it is a topsy-turvy logic. Our reason is incapable of understanding the real cause of things, but it can understand fables. Which suggests that it is our eternal wish for understanding that makes us enjoy romances and other artificial fantasies. As they unfold before us we are able to

follow both the fantasy and its logic; we have the double pleasure of enjoying a dream and our own grasp of it. And the fable gives us, indirectly, another satisfaction: its travesty of the reasonable implies that reason is, in fact, supreme.

December 4. A whole month scattered in attempts at negotiations. Every moment, up to the very last day, the discussions were broken off, and the affair seemed about to go wrong like a badly made mayonnaise. The further one got the nearer the catastrophe appeared. After a final, crushing sitting that lasted from three to seven o'clock, the purchaser's conquering signature curled itself upon the stamped paper—the beautiful quality stamped paper that is one of the rare glories of our republic. A moment of great price. I shall be easy in my mind, now, for a while. But where are the Maecenas of yesteryear and the artist's dignified parasitism?

December 5. I am opening the Ozenfant Academy at the beginning of next month. I drew up its programme at the end of *Art*, in 1928.¹ One more project that has, after all, come off.

Dined with George Lévy-Coblentz. Someone praised our present-day artists. But the praise was given to what would have been blamed in the artists of other times. There are a lot of people like that nowadays. They spare the best modern men; they do not criticise them as justly and as harshly as they criticise the Old Masters. Only the really great deserve great criticism. This kindly compassion, which is called admiration, is quite intolerable.

December 24. Christmas Eve. Listened to the broadcast of the midnight mass at the Cracow Cathedral. Midnight is a manner of speaking; it was 1.20 by Central European time. A lot of sacred palaver with a lot of "dobrze" (good) that echoes in the vaults of the great roof. Paris chimes midnight. Good-bye 1931. What a relief!

Radio-Switzerland:

"Those of the congregation who are on the right of the chapel and about the Choir will take the left-hand way;

¹ *Art*. p. 310.

those who are on the left of the chapel will take the right-hand way. In this manner all the congregation will be able to offer their thanksgivings. There are holy feasts that . . . the mystery . . . the mystery of lights in the night-time . . . the mystery . . . the mystery of Christmas, the mystery of Christ the Redeemer, the mystery of Jesus . . . the jo-oyes of Mary, praying . . . Christmas. Happy Christmas! . . . peace. . . .”

May God hear you. How out of tune with harsh reality all this sounds. . . .

Back to Poland. Good singing and influenza. A woman sneezes in the treble and, like the clever Slav she is, turns up the tail of her sneeze coquettishly. Genteel, virile, loyal, controlled coughs, evidently proceeding from official notables who know how to behave in public. It is very late. The organ drags on; the sleepy organist can't bring himself to stop. I am about to cut off when a finely-stretched Oriental voice springs up, like a jet of water. God vanishes, but I remain. She is by way of singing for the Lord, but the matter won't end there; it is not with the Infant Jesus that she will sleep to-night. Little bells, slightly off the note, announce the elevation of the Host, after which there is a tremendous organ storm, all stops out, the usual triumphant departure of people who are at last going to a good meal. And then foxtrots spurt from every part of Europe. For a Yule log I burn the old trunk I bought in Venice in 1913 and that I have taken three times to Russia as well as to many other places. . . .

Christmas night. Sad. Where is the pagan, the free-thinker, the atheist who does not feel that Christmas is sad, sadder than any other day?

On this day a new world was born.

Ours is dying.

Will the world of the future celebrate Lenin's birthday as the coming of a new messiah? It is not certain yet, but it is possible. . . .

New Year's Day. Did not feel at all well last night. The light hurt my eyes; could only stand one small lamp. Wanted some music before going to bed. From the Wireless came the voice of a young girl, a thin, high-pitched voice, cold and a little shivering. The voice faded—or was it the wave? Or myself? Can one ever know the moment when life begins to fail? Military music followed and cheered me up. Then an organ, bringing back thoughts of death, but calmly, painlessly, a peaceful, almost heroic escort.

Started to go to bed. But the geyser had decided otherwise. Twice it fired at me; it took me three-quarters of an hour's engineering to recall it to a sense of duty. Concentration on a definite job set me right again.

I slept and dreamed. We had two lions of our own, the size of donkeys. They walked the streets freely; I rode out on them to do my errands. Mine was shorn in a remarkable, exaggeratedly leonine fashion, like a poodle. People found my means of locomotion quite natural. After all, habit makes it seem quite natural to harness those great water-skins perched on stilts, that are called horses. But I was not so comfortable. I could not get it out of my head that my lion might suddenly jump over the houses. If I fell at the beginning or at the end of the spring it would not be so bad, but if I parted from the beast at the highest point of its jump I might get into considerable trouble. Having told my dream, I was informed that it was an excellent omen; it means I "shall overcome my troubles and my enemies". Righto! A good start for the New Year.

LIFE. A few years back I wanted everything in my pictures to be definite. I wanted each work to be imperative at every point. I had not understood the lesson of skies that change

and are forever becoming. Now I can see that sometimes there may be indeterminate no-man's-lands, places, as it were, of continual creation. My wish used to be to hold the onlooker in the chains of my work, that is: in my chains. Now I let the reins hang looser so that he may feel free. Attentions of this kind can be the best of traps.

Art Critics talking in front of a nice oily piece:

First Critic: There's painting for you!

Second Critic: Yes, that's painting all right.

Third Critic: Oh yes, that's painting.

Fourth Critic: Painting! That's what it is!

Fifth Critic: That's painting right enough.

Sixth Critic: What painting!

(Which of course is perfectly true. It is just painting.)

January 2. Had a good long sleep. I said once to Jean Paulhan that sleep, the strength it gives you, is the raw material of all creative work. Paulhan smiled and said: "And what you remember of it is the least interesting part—the dream."

January 9. *LIFE*. Spent the day on the figure of "Night". The pink I had used for the dawn was disastrously like a draped curtain.

January 12. Because they had been able at one time to write powerful books, bold poems, to compose subtle or learned music, to paint difficult pictures; because they had been able for a long time to keep their precarious balance; because they felt that they were great men; because they were conscious of their strength, they thought that it would be easy to go from highbrow poetry to serial stories, from the oratorio to the operette, from the oil-painting to the illustration in order, at last, to make money easily. But the musician's operettes are dull and silly, the clever writers have gone lower than the ground-floor journalists; the painter's illustrations are bad illustrations. "Who can do the greater can do the lesser," they say. Well, in art, that is not so. An old French proverb puts it crudely: "You can't fart higher than your arse." I would add: "Nor lower." As a caricaturist Leonardo

da Vinci was inferior to Forain. You can't have bad taste, you can't become mediocre, to order. To do slight work is also a gift. There are insignificant works of art in Egypt, in Greece, everywhere.

One of my pupils is an engineer who wants to learn to paint. He learns quickly: in his profession words correspond to precise things, and I help him out by using his own language. Yet how would one explain in words, even to an engineer, the "smooth running" of a machine, the quality in the working of two parts that is not "play", that is not adhesion, that is an adjustment so delicate that it cannot be measured and consequently cannot be set down in figures? Only very sensitive fingers can tell if it has been made. When it comes to the really fine, to the inexpressible, machinery also must call in sensibility, images and metaphor. Engineering abounds in metaphors. Which is a proof that there is a clarity that the clearest words cannot translate, that can only be translated by poetry and sensibility. Hence the most prosaic, hence reason itself is sometimes compelled to employ poetry and sensibility to attain greater precision.

January 14. *LIFE.* Beneath the out-stretched figures I had foreseen a green, beneath the central group, a sandy shade. The water was blue; I had made it reflect the sky. I find that this was a mistake in a picture that sought to be as "universal" as possible. The essential attribute of the sky is its blue, that of water is its lack of colour.

January 20. My pupils often ask me: How should one start? I tell them to try and bring off one small part of their drawing or their picture to their complete satisfaction. This first cell will give the note, will be a guide. Right through the work it will help to keep the picture up to a certain level. What I am saying does not contradict what I said before on the necessity of giving the work definition as late as possible. One must begin as late as possible in order to bring off a part at the first try.

A fine design is a design in which no part could be different from what it is.

Some pupils prosaically copy the model. They take the living body for a "corrected" drawing. Then, so that I should not call them servile, they introduce a certain amount of deformation here and there.

In the same way at school we all had the "master's book", and our class work consisted in devising clever mistakes.

January 21. *LIFE*. Being once again, financially at least, free to paint, I spend my days on the big study for my picture. "Night" is too detached from the other figures. It was at first a sort of make-believe of a real night. A terrestrial globe represented the world as seen from Space. Its four continents have become "four races", and their characteristic colours have been softened to the pearly colours you see in a telescope, which are also the colours of maps. This gives me the counterpoint, as it were, to the little "swarming" figures opposite. "Night" is now in correct proportion to the whole. A big night-bird is appearing near the sleepy lovers. The strange creature, its shape just brushing the human shapes, serves to awaken a sense of night's strangeness.

A pen-drawing. In drawing with a nib, if you let your hand wander freely but without definite purpose, the elasticity of the steel makes up for what is uncertain in your will and gives a false boldness to the design. But if, having your drawing clearly before you in your mind, you are able to govern the nib completely, precisely, it becomes a magnificent tool. Your design, born of will and spirit and steel, has an extraordinary vigour. I cannot help thinking of French individualism, stubborn and biting, and the magnificent results it would give if it were properly directed.

January 25. *LIFE*. The "Sun" displeases me. What is that tall personage doing with a lighting apparatus on his head?

It is often said: "The action of the plastic arts is instantaneous. They are radically different from music, which takes place in time."

This is not true. We turn quickly from some works of art, but those that are beautiful hold us. One might almost reckon the active power of a picture by measuring the time any given

onlooker spends in front of it. If the action were instantaneous he would not pause at all. The experiment can be tried. The eye cannot take in the whole of a picture at a glance; it goes from one centre of intensity to another, then to the parts that are less intense, following the actual lines of the design or its directional movement. If the picture is by a master you travel without hesitation, pursuing the course that is strictly laid down for you, imposed by the master-hand. The word "travel" implies duration. That is why I want *LIFE* to be simple enough to attract its man and complicated enough to hold him.

January 28. Have fidgeted a lot with *LIFE* these last few days. Am letting it rest. But my anxiety is getting worse and worse. Deepened the colours of the solar spectrum, tried to get the spectrum shades that are so lively and so fascinating, even to the mind—vermilion, cadmium, pink and greenish blues, yellow greens, intense blues—to live in peace with the noble ochres.¹

Tried to put on to the canvas the sketch I did last Saturday. Not too good. The colour takes the guts out of the drawing.

Some of the shapes seem cramped. We put ourselves into the shapes we see; if they lack room and air, we are as uncomfortable as if we ourselves were concerned. This result must, of course, be avoided, unless it happens to be the particular feeling or idea that one wants to convey.

January 29. Marthe tells me that a number of agents have called, wanting to buy and sell, but especially to buy, stock-exchange shares. War, they say, is imminent. A woman friend of hers swears that certain reservists have had orders from the War Ministry to stand by and prepare to join their regiments. A young German tells me also that his Swiss friends have been ordered to return to their country at the first alarm. There is a concurrence of rumours, yet nothing in the present condition of France appears to justify them. What is going on outside? Are they afraid of a surprise attack

¹ *Note 1937.* But still I did not bring it off. It is only now, August 1937, that I am succeeding, I think, in harmonising the colours of the spectrum and the ochres.

from Germany? It seems highly unlikely. The rumours make business, which was bad enough already in many directions, still worse.

Am disgusted with the cowards who become members of this or that "party" as a form of insurance against revolution. They would put their names down for a Pope's party if popery were in the air.

The Company of Jesus in Spain has been dissolved. General Strike in Seville, trouble everywhere in Spain. Exodus of Jesuits to Belgium. The Anglo-French Reparations Agreement has not been settled. There are over seventy milliards in gold at the Banque de France. Another milliard has arrived at Cherbourg. Manchuria is to become an "independent" republic. The Japanese troops are advancing on Harbin. A Sino-Japanese armistice is quieting Moscow. Mr. Dovgalewski, the U.S.S.R. Ambassador, has paid a "friendly" call on Monsieur Laval, the Prime Minister. Serious disturbances in India. Serious Hitler disturbances in Brunswick.

January 30. François Fosca, at the "Amour de l'Art", was discussing the idea of Purity. He did not seem to have grasped my theory. I tried to make it plainer to him: What I call a work of art of real precision is a work of art wherein nothing, absolutely nothing, not the very slightest tone, shape, word, sound or sign, could be changed without introducing a mistake. But! Precision is not necessarily neatness. Neatness is often a means of achieving precision and that which is precise is often neat. But neatness no less often shows up the lack of precision in an idea. A perfectly precise work would be perfectly efficient. Which is as much as saying that there are no perfectly precise works. . . .

Furthermore, the precise is too frequently confused with the finicking, the merely highly finished; and "precision" is too frequently taken to mean an exact rendering of natural objects.

The opposite of precision is not so much the imprecise, which can be perfect in its own way, as the approximative. This shows that the idea of precision is closer, fundamentally, to the idea of perfection than to the idea of neatness. If

perfection were of this world I should call "perfect art", rather than "precise art", the art that is perfectly precise in its effects. I would define precision as a tendency toward perfection.

February 4. One of my pupils, by profession a factory-builder, informs me this morning that he must give up his painting lessons. He was only painting because he was out of work. Now he is busy again. He has just received an order to enlarge the factories where the Hotchkiss gun is made and the new little anti-aircraft guns that fire as quickly as machine-guns and are said to be so marvellous. Hotchkiss is growing; the London, Paris and New York stock exchanges, which were going flat, are up again: there are great hopes of war in the China-Japan-Russia direction. The Disarmament Conference drones away at Geneva. Utterly disgusting. . . .

February 6. *LIFE.* From time to time I am profoundly discouraged. I have no sooner said to myself that what I have done is good than I begin to doubt its value. I say that I am happy, I pretend to be pleased with my work. This is a sign, rather, of discomfort, of uncertainty.

Other artists are, it seems, even less modest. Despiau cries out in front of his work: "Fine, isn't it? Isn't it really damned fine!" And proudly, his hands behind his back, he scans your face. In reality we are both trying to tap the other fellow to see if any praise will flow out. Which would be reassuring.

Others again invariably run their work down. They want you to contradict them. It is the same trick, really, a rather pathetic, naïf proceeding that is usually unsuccessful. If the man feels inclined to admire, it cramps his style; he thinks you are conceited or fishing for compliments and lets you know it by going on quickly to other things. And you are more uncertain of yourself than ever.

LIFE.

"Pour soulever un poids si lourd,
Sisyphé, il faudrait ton courage.
Bien qu'on ait du cœur à l'ouvrage,
L' Art est long et le Temps est court."

(Baudelaire.)

To-night I went upstairs again to the studio to hear a little music. I turned on the Wireless but it sicked up "The Merry Widow", and I cut it off at once: I don't feel at all merry. Looking for something more in keeping with my mood, I happened to notice the ephemeris and was surprised to see that it is exactly one year ago, day for day, that I began this diary. This time last year, the 6th of February. Already . . .

You know what my year has been.

Every Wireless Station has a "carrier-wave" of a specific length. The wave is regular, that is to say it can be set down graphically by a regularly wavy line that is always the same. The microphone transforms the sound-wave into an electric wave. The electric wave affects the carrier-wave and alters it, "modulates" it as the electricians say. The "modulated carrier-wave" is received by the set and changed back into sound.

Have I "modulated" my carrier-wave properly this year? Carrier-wave: symbol of the flow of each man's destiny, his fate; its modulations: the variations that his will brings to the stream of destiny. . . .

The variations are, no doubt, very small. Yet that is not quite true; nothing in life is unimportant. Our happiness depends less on great upheavals than on adjustments that are small compared with the size of the stream but supremely important with regard to ourselves and the particular moment.

Our actions—variations on a predetermined theme. . . . So it is with all music.

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August. Have hardly written anything these last months. Too many anxieties, political anxieties especially.

Hitler has been made Government Councillor in Brunswick. (The Hitlerites wanted to roughhouse me there last year.) Hitler has been fighting old Marshal Hindenburg for the Presidency of the Reich.

Hindenburg 19,359,642 votes. Elected.

Hitler 13,417,460

Thaelmann 3,706,388 only.

Between the first and the second ballot Hitler won two million votes and Thaelmann lost 1,275,691. Hitler the painter—he's a promising lad. At the Prussian Diet elections the Hitlerites won 162 seats instead of 7. Whereupon the party fought harder than ever. Come on! Another little go and we'll do it! Hitler wants to be Chancellor. Hindenburg offered to share power with him. But oh dear no! "My party wants full power." Hindenburg is annoyed, and Hitler goes back to Munich.

A law court has had the impertinence to condemn five Hitlerites who had kicked a sleeping Communist to death. As a protest the Hitlerites break up the Jews' shops.

Adolf Hitler . . . You remember in Germany last year, all serious-minded Germans burst out laughing, they slapped their thighs, crying that Hitler was a clown and would never get anywhere.

Ireland has refused to take the oath of allegiance and is boycotting England.

Monuments to the 1914-1918 ossuaries are being unveiled all over the place, lavishly trimmed with peace speeches.

Spain is having a hard time trying to be a republic, and is constantly making trouble, plotting and counterplotting. The monarchist General Sanjurgo (with some others) is arrested, condemned to death, exiled and allowed to escape.¹

Bolivia and Paraguay are having a scrap. In Chili, Brazil and Finland the Fascists are pushing for all they are worth.

Briand is dead.

Monsieur Doumer, President of the French Republic, is assassinated.

At the Elections, the Radicals win 47 seats, the S.F.I.O. Socialists 17, the Communists 2. Monsieur Lebrun, a good, honest fellow, takes Doumer's place.

Lindbergh's son has been assassinated. The new liner, the *Georges Philippart*, has burst into flames in the Red Sea with a hundred passengers on board. Twelve thousand American War veterans are camping outside Washington.

¹ Note 1936. The Republic very generously pardoned him, only to find him fighting her in 1936. General Sanjurgo was killed in an aeroplane on his way to join Franco's rebels.

I will spare you the hundred-and-one Geneva conferences and the mountains of papers signed, the Gentleman's Agreements, the "pacts of mutual trust", etc., that everyone is firmly determined to ignore.

England, France and Italy want to prove to America that they owe her nothing.

Happily a glorious feat of arms has been achieved in Morocco: we have been victorious in the Ou-Tarlat district. The pretty little war goes on. The Japanese have only conquered Manchuria. China is a member of the League of Nations. The League does nothing: Manchuria is too far away. War is very much alive.

Oh well. Life is a wretched thing, and where it isn't wretched it is idiotic. The Crisis saddens everyone; to many men it is a tragedy.

To sweeten the general disorder there are the stinking smells that the financiers let off, the bust-up of their dirty banks and combines. The Swede Kreuger, whose family manufactured matches in a small way, undertakes the creation of a match-trust. It becomes one of the world's biggest banking businesses. Kreuger lends money to Governments that are hard up and receives the monopoly of the match trade in exchange. Twenty countries are under his thumb. Monsieur Poincaré wants him to have France's matches too but Parliament won't allow it. Nevertheless, Kreuger obtains certain French markets and lends France-Poincaré two milliards. He lends money to the Reich; throughout the world he has control of mines and forests and factories. . . . But the German financial chaos upsets his apple-cart. He runs round the world asking for help, fails to get it, comes to Paris, fails again and kills himself. In Sweden, the shock to public companies and private people is appalling; the stock exchange is closed; a moratorium is declared. And Kreuger "lies in a lead-lined, oak coffin, with a small pane of glass in front of his face".

Another king, Eastman (of Kodaks) has also committed suicide, they say—out of boredom. His Majesty Gillette, king of razors, died less spectacularly.

It feels like the end of an era: the end of the business kings, and with them of Big Business. Unfortunately, the new era that is dawning with Hitler is not very encouraging.

It is true that Mussolini is drawing nearer to the Church. He has spent two hours chatting with the Pope, and then went and prayed in Saint Peter, the saintly man.

August 13. I have come to a standstill. *LIFE* has come to a standstill. I am sad, unhappy, lonely, good for nothing; there is a bitter taste in my mouth.

Everyone has left Paris for the holidays. It has been extremely hot the last few days, and my liver is upset. Which does not make things easier. The August sunshine is dry, colourless, brutal. Beneath it the city's asphalts and stones and cements have no bloom, no beauty. They look impermanent. I recall, longingly, the wise, the pure, the serene, eternal landscapes of Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. Two years ago at this time I was there. Two years already. . . .

Doubts have been growing in me for many months now—doubts of the time we live in and of its art and of myself. A harsh agony. Does this diary show the premonitory symptoms clearly? Looking through it I cannot be sure. The reactions of one's will-to-power have clever ways of camouflaging an approaching disappointment; the self has scores of substitution tricks whereby it keeps up its own tone.

Briefly—for six months I have had no taste for anything, I have lived hating my pictures and my writing, yet coming back to them ten times, twenty times an hour, like a criminal to the scene of his crime, morbidly irresolute, fiddling with my work, spoiling everything I touch. Completely out of gear in body and in mind. Physically nothing is right under my skin. During all the thirty years I have spent painting and writing—I wrote and painted when I was at school—never have I known such disquiet.

Until now I never doubted my own strength. I mean, I always believed that if I worked hard I would succeed, by fulfilling myself, in being of use to my world. And I have worked very hard. I did not know what boredom was. I am

bored to death. And the blackness of physical depression is making my doubts blacker. I have taken, lately, to behaving with lamentable shyness, being always uncertain how I should behave. Everything is conditioned for me by some condition I cannot grasp. If I go to a cinema, my persistent uncertainty, my persistent wretchedness make me envy the wild beasts that follow their destiny automatically, smoothly, and the Russian mason who beats the brick-laying record so heartily because he knows that he is helping to build something. I envy that cat, there, that is gravely concentrating all its life forces on the catching of a sparrow; I almost envy the sparrow. I envy the grass its simple, easy growth; I envy the luck of the cloud going whither the wind blows it; I envy the wind's luck for being drawn irresistibly into a hollow of the atmosphere.

I hardly know more of the cause of things than the wild beasts, the Russian, the cat, the cloud, the wind. Contrary thoughts blow through me; their active forces meet and are annihilated; their double stress holds me still.

I would like to give myself up to a strong current. I am jealous of the young Russians with their happy, uplifted eyes and their fervent elaboration of the plan their materialist leaders have traced for them. Joyfully active, their life is fresh and joyful. No excessive criticism clouds their ardour (and their complicated Slav loves save them from monotony). Their dialectic plays its matches in the stadium "Reality".

"Is it true?" a young Russian asked. "Is it possible that, before our Revolution, there were newspapers that reported the same event differently?"

"Yes. There were newspapers of the Right, of the Left, of the Centre and of many other parties. Their opinions were often diametrically opposed."

"But then what became of Truth? What did they do with the truth?"

Such honest candour is an idealism that makes for happiness. They see the proof of their usefulness, the good results of their efforts, in the slow but regular improvement of their lives, of the life of all their huge country. They understand very clearly

what they are allowed to understand, that is: practically nothing. But what about us? In spite of all our efforts, what do we know? We persist in trying to elucidate matters that are beyond understanding; we spend our lives running our heads against the incomprehensible; we use up our strength trying to seize the forever elusive, to imagine the unimaginable, to solve questions that are recognised to be insoluble and are perhaps without meaning. And what do we get? A hard life and empty dreams. How well I understand the attitude of the man, the happy man, who is by nature practical. We seem to him like children blowing bubbles.

Taine said of the artist:

“ . . . his work, to which a million unknown collaborators have contributed, will be all the finer if it contains, over and above his own labour and his own genius, the labour and the genius of the men about him and of the generations that have gone before.”

And Giraudoux:

“Those who still believe in genius will also have the opportunity of seeing, when they consider Racine, that in a civilisation that has reached its highest peaks and whose followers have achieved a soul that is nourished in all its parts, genius cannot compete with talent. For it is the civilisation itself that has genius, whether it be the civilisation of Pericles or of Louis the Fourteenth.”

Our era has genius, if the genius of a time can be measured by the grandeur and the number of its changes, by the profound stirring of its technical and social, intellectual and moral currents.

Why is it that artists and so many of the best men have no share in this ferment?

Have we allowed the streams that linked us to the great spring to dry up?

Plutarch:

"Pericles appointed Phidias strategus of Athenian art so that all new works were unified and harmonious, without clash or discordance, and truly Attic in spirit since they all reflected the genius of a man who was the highest incarnation of the Attic spirit."

Consider this carefully:

Too many of us have forgotten that an élite soon gives out if it cuts itself off, if its roots no longer receive strength and sap from the mass of the people. Woe on an élite that becomes a caste. Look at Egypt and the decadence that followed the rule of the priestly caste, at China and its mandarins, at Spain and its royalty. France is going towards the same sterility. Or possibly a worse sterility, since our ruling caste, being only a money caste, is worth less than the priests, the mandarins or the kings.

We are rebels, we rebel against a form of government that keeps men in poverty, against the stupidity of the State and the blind infamy of most rich men and the weakness of those who are in power. Their weakness is so wretched that one could pity them if they were not the cause of so much unhappiness and so much humiliation. They are revolting. . . .

And we rebel against ourselves. Our weariness and our despair comes from our feeling of uselessness. Our anger is the only thing that gives us back a little strength.

We are utterly alone. It is exhausting, after a while, to work solely for oneself. And to work for the little group that we have fashioned in our own image and that believes, that declares itself to be mankind's highest perfection is, almost, to work for oneself. The notion of supremacy is flattering but very dangerous.

D'Alembert also cried: "Woe upon the art whose beauty is only for artists!"

In the long run, to know that what you think, write, paint is at best tolerated (sometimes completely ignored) by the

Note 1937. Rereading the above many years later I can see that mine was in reality a case of conscience. "I take more pleasure in the thing itself than in the thought of a thing," said St. Augustine. There is nothing much to add to his excellent definition of a sense of responsibility. For St. Augustine it was a question of his responsibility towards God; for us it is a question of our responsibility towards all men: a sense of enjoying pleasures that are not shared or that are not shareable.

great mass of men, drains all your energy; it is as though you were alone in speaking your language. The world's contact, moreover, is absolutely necessary; it helps us to know what we are doing, it helps us to correct ourselves and to persevere, it feeds us with living ideas. Dear Elie Faure!¹ Two years ago I blamed you for prophesying the death of painting. How well I understand you to-day!

Mr. But: "Pure thought or pure art has nothing to do, necessarily, with social life. Artists have talent or genius. That's all."

"Easily said. But it is a cancer-thought."

Of course we must always do our private laboratory work. But we must do other work as well. Since Cézanne, through the "fauve" days, through cubism, abstractionism, dadaism, purism, surréalisme, there have been studios that were laboratories turning out products of extreme purity. But the pursuit of purity for its own sake ends in sterility. I understood that as far back as 1925 and turned my mind towards research of a more human kind. Now we have products that are purer than ever; what food shall we make of them? We have kept our eyes on our phials long enough. Look out for the drug-habit!

When a sense of responsibility, of duty towards society gets hold of you, reason can do nothing against it. I am hungry. My watch may say, if it likes, that the time to be hungry has not come. I *am* hungry. . . .

A new and imperative duty has come to me. I know that it will be all-powerful. May it be of help to me!

The strangest part of it is that the people, at the moment, are astonishingly quiet. There is no sign anywhere of a coming revolt. Yet the fever is rising in me.

To be obsessed by the abyss that separates you from the people brings you at last to a numbing vertigo. . . .

And France is playing yoyo.²

August 14. The doctor says I ought to rest.

How pleasant and restful it would be to obey him.

But I only half obeyed.

¹ Died in 1937.

² The yoyo was the rage in 1932.

To obey altogether I would need the habit of obedience.

To-day I have found the energy to obey. Stretched out on the terrace in a cheap deck-chair, staring at the sky, my head empty, I watch the little motes that swim in my own eyes. Like infusoria in the water of a microscope, a bird is swimming in Nature's blue eye. A sparrow shoots into my line of sight, the field that is vaguely bounded by my nose, and gets entangled in my eyebrows. A little wind is fussing with the branches, scattering the smoke. Celestial palms, icy vapours shaped like talipot leaves, stand motionless and presently melt away. The quiet lawns and the lovely flowers ripple before me, the elms quiver above my head; only a fountain or a small cascade is lacking to compose a very tasteful piece. Still, Nature is doing her best. A workman is treating sick iron-work with red lead, a bloody business, and scraps from a rotting, rusting chimney fall at my feet. The cat steps forth with infinite stateliness, taking quite ten minutes to cross the meadow in a straight line. She halts and defecates gravely, then flicks her tail, making a flourish, gay like the flourish of a pen endorsing a cheque, and starts off again as though she had all eternity before her. The dust floats upon the air; the sun finishes its day's task without haste. Everything, in fact, seems to work in such slow motion that a butterfly going by on great jerky beats of its wings, in a hurry to save a few pence, looks silly in the sweet evening silence. The cat is wise. She seems to know that a good digestion, the smooth functioning of the adjacent parts of the stomach is the foundation and the chief aim of life. I should make a good Tibetan to-day, admirably contemplative and materialistic.

But how wearisome this negative state is!

I only give in to it because I know that the holiday and the nonsense are good for me. I am already nearly cured.

I have been vaguely pondering the Frenchman's constant inclination, that he gets from the Mediterranean, to love form as form, to accept an idea only if its form is pure, to like nothing that has not a lovely form, to the point, at times, of

preferring the form to the idea, of enjoying nonsense if it is well done. Isn't this really a living, practical wisdom? If everything is vain, then form is vain—but not more so than the rest of life.

A predisposition in us makes us desire a form that will fit it. Our desire awakens the will to create the form; the impulsion of our will makes us act; through action we are saved from despair. And the form that action takes binds us to reality—the form that lay, a moment ago, shapeless in the clay, dispersed among the colours, hidden in the stone, the steel, the ink; that was scattered here and there in the brass, the wood, the string fibres of orchestral instruments. Thought, obeying the impulse of our need, calls forth the form from the limbo of potential thoughts, incarnates it in a suitable substance and fulfils the need. A new reality, strong in its healthy youth, is before us and, seeing it, the charms of reality, that a stale world had dulled, waken again. So form saves us; our taste for life is restored; a bog has been crossed.

The winter wheat is being sown. The grain, the potential plant, is harshly bound within the rough, protecting husk appointed to the preservation of young seeds. A storm brings the rain, the deliverer. The rain and the sower are the delegates of the world's higher will, that ordains renewal. Soon the moisture soaks into the kernel and helps it to swell vigorously. Its guardian shell resists the new life impulse with all its might. Its instinct is conservative; it has been useful, it has rendered good service; it claims as its reward that things should remain *in statu quo*. But the germ, sharp as a spear, tears through the old wrapping. The tiny seed has been asleep for years. It began to shoot at dawn and now an obstacle has wakened it fully; it turns about the constricting thing, lifts, thrusts it aside, pierces it: a germinating seed has been known to split an iron bullet. A touch of moisture, and the latent explosive, but yesterday the very symbol of patience and passivity, to-day refuses to wait another second, refuses to endure the slightest constraint. The plant conquers or dies.

The sprouting kernel divides into two twin lobes. The tumescent stalk lifts its head to the stars; the leaves thrive on vapours, gases, light; the roots burrow into the ground, their radicles possess it, absorbing the salts and the substances of the soil. As though for a triumphant conquest, the plant makes sure, in one and the same moment, of all the forces of the earth and of the air.

Thousands and thousands of cells—each believing, no doubt, that it is alone in the world and acting only for its own life's benefit—accomplish their obscure, collective destiny, which is to serve the life of the plant and the life of an infinity of other beings, other societies, which also, while believing that they are fighting for their own survival, contribute to the evolution of mankind and the universe.

Innocent green leaves growing deliciously in the waves of of light—a savoury meal for the tiny white flies, the wreckers of infant plant-life. (I put that right every morning by spraying them with nicotine. I am the Tcheka; I won't have the white armies harm my young rebels.)

My wizened old cactus, sluggish and cancerous: slow old Europe. And active young Russia, bold violence of growth. . . .

How well they know, the young Russians and the young plants, how to behave, how to help on their own destiny. . . .

I am definitely better. It's easy to say: "You're tired. Rest." The trouble was greater than that, went deeper than that, though it was less harmful, perhaps, than a sterile sickness. I had reached the point of loving the theoretical more than the real. Nothingness yawned in front of me and I turned giddy. Luckily the ass saw the danger and lay down.

There are moments when notions about things are not worth the things themselves. I am going to charge into the bunch like a bull, to catch Reality on my horns. I need an armful of reality. I need its forces. I know well enough that the works of the mind, even the most abstract, are also architecture, and that there are arguments that can be beautiful and useful. But I am hungry for a structure that is solid and

resistant to the touch, that can be got hold of as though with hands. I want matter that is heavy, tough, dry; genuine matter that requires effort to move it and that will be strong enough to bear the new floors I shall build on it. To-day I want the stout, immediate Real. Things. The spiders' webs of Dream must go.

"And what shall we do about the Fairies, sir?"

"To hell with them!"

This is my zero hour. I want to use my jaws; I have had nothing to bite on, most of the time, but doubts.

I imagined I was at a standstill, and all this work was going on in me. It was the fight to tear myself from the past that was exhausting. Hooray for the brute I have saved! And no tears or flowers for the man I am burying with the dismal summer—that nevertheless gave me the chance to live (if one can call it live) that particular month of August.

Usually when I write I have a book of fine pictures, reproductions from the antique masterpieces, open on the table before me; they are there to give me the right pitch. To-day I have clapped the book to and am looking out of the window at the sunburnt people who are coming back from Nature, strong and ready for work.

How the light flowers! I have given myself enough wrinkles looking for ideas to have the right, at last, to choose an idea that will be of service to me!

I would have preferred the Athenian Aphrodite, but now I will be content with any empty-headed Venus so long as she is there beside me, handsome and real.

"So it is realism and materialism you're after?" said Mr. But.

"Never mind theories. Materialism? I'll tell you presently what I mean by that. Realism? Certainly. And let's get it quite clear. One's business is to do one's job, the job for which one is equipped."

The marble needed the marble-cutter in order to become the Erechtheion or the Florence Baptistery or that stela or that statue or this paper-weight—things that no one had seen before. There has always been confusion on this point. The Realist is supposed to be the man who copies reality. But when

a cat brings off a happy stroke with its paw it is a unique stroke; never, at any moment in the world's history, had there been a stroke exactly like that. It is a novelty. Photography is only duplication. The true realist is the man who invents new reality. In art and in everything else.

And then. I have seen it at last. Or rather I have had the courage to admit it, this morning, gaily:

MY BIG PICTURE, *LIFE*, IS A FAILURE

What a relief!

Why didn't I see it sooner?

The personifications of the Sun and the Night were childish, mythological, out of time, artificial. Our direct, physical notion of the world is infinitely more moving than those theatrical divinities. The Sun is not a more or less athletic champion; the Night, to us 1932 men, is not a lazy odalisque. The exciting colours, the delicate glazes, the transparencies, all the pomps and artifices of painting could not put life into those antiquated symbols. This chapter was to have ended with a reproduction of my finished picture. It ends with a study I have rejected.

Extremely painful.

I thought I was reaching the goal and I must begin all over again.

Well then I will start the picture all over again, from the beginning. I can paint a small canvas from the big study:
In Memoriam Ozenfant 1932.

I have learnt something, that is the great point.

One has no right nowadays to let oneself be weakened; the times need strong men.

Finito il lamento

September 1. Hitler has said at the Sports Palace in Berlin: "The German State is identified with the idea of Race." The opinions of this thinker are already known from *Mein Kampf*.

October 23. Hitler says: "I will destroy Marxism."

October 27. In Great Britain an army of unemployed—

there is terrible unemployment in the country—are marching on London. Hunger's Army. . . .

November 6. I have been listening all the evening to the Berlin Wireless Station giving the results of the German legislative elections. The Hitlerites lose 35 seats, the Social-Democrats 12, the Communists win 11. Still some hope. . . .

November 8. Franklin D. Roosevelt succeeds Hoover as President of the U.S.A.

November 9. The Geneva police loses its head at a political meeting and fires, killing ten men.

November 17. Von Papen, Chancellor of the Reich, resigns.

November 19. Hindenburg receives Hitler.

November 23. Hitler insists on full powers.

November 29. Signing of the Franco-Soviet Non-aggression Pact.

December 13. The Action Française makes violent demonstrations outside the Chamber of Deputies. The question at the moment is to put pressure on the Government to prevent its paying America the instalment of War Debt due on December 15th. Herriot, the Prime Minister, is of opinion that France should honour her signature and pay the instalment, but on condition that the U.S.A. allows discussions to be opened on a new basis, namely the situation created by Germany's non-payment of her Debts to France.

December 14. Herriot is in a minority of 57 votes to 380.

So, after having screamed the world down, since the end of the War, with yells of horror at Germany's dishonesty, Germany's "scrap of paper" policy, France finds it in herself, by a majority of 380 votes out of 437, to insist on an identical policy. Fall of the Herriot Ministry.

War continues in China.

December. Another year gone. It ends in collapse. No hope. One could wish there was a God to pray to. M. Lebrun, President of the Republic, has received Monsignor Maglione, the Papal Nuncio, in audience to-day. Everything is going well. Everything is going well with the Pope's affairs. When everything is at its worst, poor devils turn towards the gods.

1933

January 30. Hitler has come to the throne. He is Chancellor of the Reich. One gapes at the thought that the Social-Democrats, the Communists, all the Left parties that one fancied were so strong, should have given in so easily. It is to be supposed that many of the Socialists took Hitler for one of themselves, seeing only the "socialism" in "national-socialism".

February 1. Hitler dissolves the Reichstag. Germany's democratic Republic has not lasted long! Hitler says: "In four years I will repair the damage done by fourteen years of Marxism."

Marxism! Marxists, those liberals, those big or little bourgeois who were governing the Republic . . . !

Hitler has won because he did not care what means he used to reach power, and because his adversaries, the Republicans and the Socialists, were honest, if short-sighted men, decently respectful of the law. It is, as usual, the tale of the lamb and the wolf. One's sympathies, of course, go to the lamb, yet it might be time now for the parties of the Left to make up their minds in every country whether they will always let themselves be gobbled down so innocently.

Unfortunately the world's democrats estimate their strength by their numbers; they look complacently on their Trade Union organisations, believing them invincible because they work well in matters of claims and salaries. In a time of social peace, to count on the mass of men to which one belongs, mostly means counting on others, and as nearly every man does, in fact, count on the others, there is no one there, when the blow falls, but a herd of helpless lambs.

Look at the crushing defeats that Social-Democracy, the Second International, has sustained lately. Twelve years ago Mussolini's national fascio made a single mouthful of Italian Socialism. And now the powerful German organisation is in the bag.

Whose turn will come next?

It is really very demoralising to see that, after all, might is righter than honesty, law, ideals. And they call us civilised!

Are you, too, you the French Socialists and you, the "mighty" English Labour Party—are you going to let yourselves be had?

The dramatic side of it is that one hates violence. But there are cases where violence is a moral duty and it is necessary to break the law in order to prevent a universal evil.

Every day there is disquieting news for the democrat. At Geneva the League of Nations continues to play the Jesuit interminably over the Armaments question and the Chinese war.

February 10. Hitler howls as usual at the Sports Palace: "Marxism has been the ruin of Germany."

In Paris to-day, as a protest against the new taxes, most of the shops are shut. The shop-keepers who refuse to close down are being threatened by the strike-leaders, members of the Right, of course. The reactionaries used their class privileges to organise the Crisis but they are not prepared to accept its consequences. The success of Mussolini and Hitler have stirred them up. People are expecting "something to happen".

February 16. Colombia and Peru are fighting.

February 27. The Reichstag is burnt down by a man named van de Lubbe, said to be a Communist. A mass-arrest of Socialists of all shades of opinion. There are rumours that Goering organised the fire.

February 28. French Chamber reduces the salaries of Government employees.

March 2. Five thousand "Marxists" arrested in Germany, sent to concentration camps or assassinated.

March 3. The Japanese reach the Great Wall of China.

March 5. The U.S.A. puts an embargo on gold.

March 6. Wall Street is closed.

March 10. Hitler: "I will not let the police be used to defend Jewish shops."

A group of writers and artists have published a manifesto in Paris:

“Our protest against the abominations committed by the Hitler adventurers is intended to strike also at the Versailles men—by which I mean the authors of the Treaty of Versailles—who have set up in Germany and in the whole world a state of probably unprecedented anarchy, wretchedness and despair. We, the French Republic and the Anglo-Saxon Democracies, have furnished the bankers, the country squires, the manufacturers and politicians of Germany with the pretexts they required to turn against us and against the German people the poisoned knife that we had thrust into the heart of the vanquished. This fact should be known and understood first and foremost, in order to fight them on good grounds and in order to forestall the same dangers in our own countries. The plunderers have invaded the ruins. They are only bolder than the others.”

(Elie Faure.)

“There is not one honest man in the entire world who has not felt his gorge rise at the news of what has been happening in Germany since the appalling night of Saturday last. The excuses that the Hitler dictatorship is giving for its stifling of all spiritual effort, all intellectual liberty, all bodily and civic freedom are a miserable farce. No one is taken in by them. The sinister producers of the scene have not even tried to give it an appearance of likelihood. But we will not in turn cry out—even to our oppressed German brothers—the famous Fascist exhortation: ‘Germany awake!’ We will not be so absurd as to encourage our neighbours to fight while we remain inactive. Remembering the brave, the true saying: ‘The greatest enemy is always in one’s own house,’ we will turn to the free minds of France and cry to them, in the light of the moral conflagration that is devastating Germany: ‘France awake!’ Frenchmen awake! See the danger. It is everywhere the same.

The sole, efficacious help that we can give the present and the future victims of tyranny, lies in our fight against those Frenchmen who love the executioners and their political accomplices. This is our task; we must not fail in it."

(Jean-Richard Bloch.)

"All the men whose brains are not completely ossified and who have hearts and not stuffed bladders in their chests, must rise and shout in horror of the foul terrorism the National-Socialists are inflicting on the people of Germany."

(Jean Painlevé.)

". . . Japan is making war. The U.S.A. are making ready for a war in the Pacific. Italy is preparing her own war. The Balkans are preparing for war. The whole world is preparing for war.

"The U.S.S.R. alone is building up a peaceful order among its peaceful fellowship of peoples, free from the murderous thoughts and the hypocrisies that enrich the armament manufacturers and lead the people to the slaughter.

". . . it is a question of Fascism or revolution, of war or peace, of life or death.

"The imperialists stand shoulder to shoulder. German Fascism is ready to engender French Fascism. Fascism in Germany is the outcome of the Treaty of Versailles. Of the three men who drew up the treaty in France's name, the first, the Tiger, is dead. The second, Klotz, swindler, senator and Minister of Finance, is dead. The third, Tardieu—corrupt himself and arch-type of corrupters—is our candidate for Dictatorship. Tardieu-Hitler-Tardieu, the return-ticket of history.

"The German elections are putting new life into Fascism's pupils in France. From across the frontier Fascism is seeping into the already desperate bourgeois class. A wave of nationalism is flowing over the country, breaking down the last

barriers of painted cardboard of a League of Nations in which everyone has ceased to believe and that Japan has openly flouted."

(Vaillant-Couturier.)

"The events in Germany do not lend themselves to speeches or to poems. There are new threats every day, new dramas, cries of hatred and of genuine revolt. I join with my French comrades, workmen and intellectuals, in protesting against a régime that oppresses our German comrades, the unvanquished victims of terror."

(Eugène Dabit.)

"With all my heart I join with you in protesting against this horror, this step back of civilisation. One is ashamed to use only words to fight so much infamy."

(Paul Signac.)

". . . It is painful to see freedom of thought and artistic expression in Germany stopped by a reaction that is threatening to swamp her entire musical renaissance."

(Darius Milhaud.)

"Germany is giving us a terrifying example of the oppression that a country is inevitably drawn into when it persists in seeking its salvation in nationalism. It seizes upon, or creates, the desired pretext; any means of obtaining dominion, however iniquitous, will seem to it good. It is a policy that necessarily leads to war. Those who wish to avoid war must realise at last that only a class-war, by which I mean every country's fight against its own imperialism, can check the conflict that is now being prepared and that, this time, will prove deadly."

(André Gide.)

"Artists, writers, scientists, see what is happening in Germany, think of it. Can you remain neutral? Close your
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ranks. Act. Every thought that leads to war is a cancer-thought. A single, united front against the old cancer-thoughts!"

(Amedée Ozenfant.)

A great number of artists and intellectuals, as well as three hundred doctors of the French Section of the International Anti-War Association of Doctors, also signed it.

I have quoted the above so as to give some notion of how the artists and intellectuals rallied about the anti-Fascist idea. A number of new men appear on it as well as the older fighters.

They were all firm friends of democratic Germany, strong partisans of a Franco-German rapprochement. Their present gesture was solely against Hitler, in no wise against Germany, as the reactionary pro-Hitler or Hitler-dictated Press made out.¹

March 11. Have not written much lately. During the day I work on my drawing for *LIFE*; a great number of my evenings are spent at political meetings.

Saw the Delacroix exhibition at the Orangerie. One's mind is not on that sort of thing.

March 20. Monsieur Camille Faust, alias Camille Mauclair, was at one time a poet and a good art critic. He founded the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* with Lugné-Poë. To-day he is a hot nationalist-reactionary of the worst order. He attacks everything that has life in it. Lately he has been going for Le Corbusier and myself, severally and together, coarsely and with extreme violence in the *Figaro*, the paper owned by the Fascistscent- manufacturer, Coty. As Monsieur Mauclair repeated his attacks I wrote him a letter correcting a few ill-informed statements and asking him to print it in his paper. Which he did not do. So I sent it on to the *Intransigeant*, and it appeared this evening under the headline: "Ku Klux Klan is not dead."

Note 1937. Barbusse the writer died in 1935; the painters Signac and Dabû in 1936; Élie Faure, the writer, and Vaillant-Coturier, painter and writer, in 1937. I knew them all well and know that their lives were undoubtedly shortened by the new pains and stresses that their fervent battle against Fascism added to their work.

March 22. There was a big meeting last night on "Terrorism in Germany", presided over by André Gide. This is the first time that André Gide has taken part in a political gathering. That an intellectual of his individualistic, slightly anarchistic turn of mind should be drawn into the political stream is indeed a sign of the times. Other speakers included Elie Faure, Signac, Crevel, Berlioz, Dabit, Eluard, Malraux, Bernard Lecache, Vildrac and myself.

I pointed out that art in France was in danger of being fascised:

"Monsieur Mauclair has been attacking all new work regularly for some time. Now M. Waldemar George has printed a diatribe in his review *Formes*, against Cubism, the *Esprit Nouveau* movement, modern architecture, Picasso—and also against Cézanne, Seurat and Van Gogh! His arguments are those of Hitler.

"Hitler has closed down the modern art school in Dessau, Gropius' Bauhaus. M. W. George justifies him by saying:

'One of the art reviews has been asking why the National-Socialist Municipality of Dessau should have closed down the famous Bauhaus and why the Hitler party should hold up all modern forms of art to obloquy. The answer is very simple. Whatever its value, the National-Socialist Party is the party of Youth, its face is turned towards the future.

'It sees in the art that was taught in Dessau—the cult of an abstract, magical language that Klee and Kandinsky preached in a setting worthy of the film "Metropolis"—a decay of the spiritual, moral and aesthetic fibre of men and citizens.'

"It is true that the critic adds:

' . . . I quote this case as an example. It would be wrong to see in it a political profession of faith.'

"Nevertheless, in the same number of his review, you read:

'Our art editor has just returned from a lecture tour in Rome, Florence and Milan. . . . He spoke on the principles of the new humanism . . . and traced an ideal outline of Fascist art, founded on the art of Rome. . . . He was received in private audience by Signor Mussolini, to whom he submitted a number of plans whereby Rome could become the centre of modern art in Europe.'

"So our critic is not a Hitlerite, although he respects Hitler's '*kunst politik*'. He is an italianate Fascist. Which does not prevent him from saying in his manifesto that he would like France to 'gallicise' European taste.

"He is by no means a fool or untalented. I drew the meeting's attention to him as a warning against the danger of saying, as so many Frenchmen are inclined to do: 'That sort of violence, that sort of bosh can never be in France.' "

So you see that henceforth politics are part of the artist and the intellectual's business, indeed of their immediate duties. In the old days, yesterday, politicians kept them out of politics; usually they kept out themselves. Now the dictators are expressly attacking artists and intellectuals. How can we ignore the dictators?

March 23. Hitler adjourns Parliament *sine die*.

Yesterday a number of young men who had organised the meeting came to Gide, begging him to put his name down as a member of a new cultural and anti-Fascist association. I heard him reply that he had never and would never be a member of any organised group so as never to be in "a position to betray".

His words made a considerable impression on those who heard him, on the young men who were gathered about him as about an idol, eager to engage their lives in the service of the idea to which he, the great writer, had brought his fame and his power.

I saw Gide's look and the profound emotion that he could not altogether hide. Being more familiar than my young comrades with the foreshortenings of literary thought and

speech, I understood that where they feared the painful disappointment of being confronted with a suspiciously cautious attitude, there was, in fact, nothing but intellectual prudence and honesty. If you consider Gide's public and the world to which he belongs, the rich, upper bourgeoisie, you will see that he had acted with great courage.

His emotion may have come also from a desire to compromise himself fully and finding he was powerless to do so. . . .

Gide's attitude, his plucky rallying to the Left's cause, has set a lot of ink flowing. The Left has raised him instantly to the ranks of Tolstoi, Romain Rolland, Barbusse:

" . . . this famous writer, the greatest of French writers."

"This man of the best bourgeois class, who has never known poverty, who is not afraid to set himself in the forefront of the social battle. . . ."

The Right newspapers, of course, drag him in the mud. The people who were amused or delighted, yesterday, by his morals, now declare they are scandalous.

Coming out of Bullier where Gide had again been chairman of a large meeting, Gide, Lurçat, Cassou and I went to a little café at the corner of the Boulevard du Port Royal and the Avenue de l'Observatoire to have a bock on the terrace.

Gide said: "When I think that with all these great things happening, people in France are still writing novels!"

I suggested to him that: "In Russia novels are widely written and widely read. The means of livelihood are assured; minds are not held by the fear of to-morrow, by the money and other troubles that crush our unemployment-ridden countries and keep us from enjoying any art freely, easily. The other day at the Delacroix Exhibition I couldn't keep my attention on the pictures. To-day I tried to read a little Racine. I couldn't. My mind was elsewhere."

"I feel for you," Gide said. "But I am sixty and what is happening to me is not too pleasant. I was holding a hand of cards and now they tell me that all the values are changed. . . ."

"I should have said that was a great piece of luck for you. Just at the moment when you might have believed that your themes were exhausted, you are given subjects for an entire life-work!"

There was a silence. Then Gide said:

"We have not made enough here of the Russians' splendid organisation of their leisure hours."

"It is because of it that so many books are read in U.S.S.R. Your books, Monsieur Gide. Socialism organises work and gives material security and so allows leisure, the time and the peace of mind needed for reading."

"It is most important," said Gide.

There had been workers at the meeting who were just back from Russia, and Gide said how much he had admired their good sense, their accuracy, their judicious criticisms. He was particularly enthusiastic over one speech, its health, its youthful sanity. It had been delivered by a fair-haired Northern girl, and Gide could not get over his astonishment at finding so much balance, so much humour, such a vivid and powerful form of expression in the mouth of a plain, working girl. To tell the truth this was probably the first time that the great *littérateur* had been in direct contact with the people. (The other day his audience was an audience of intellectuals.) Standing by him on the platform to-night I noticed his extreme emotion when thousands of working people made him a respectful ovation, cheering the great bourgeois who had joined them. Looking at the crowd Gide's eyes were moist and wide open as though he were looking for the first time at the sea.

March 29. A Hitler manifesto, ordering a "systematic and crushing boycott of the Jews".

Jewish barristers and judges forbidden to practise, or to hold office.

March 31. Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, announces that if the foreign protests against the German anti-Jewish policy do not cease before the 5th of May, the measures taken against Jews will increase, "with a force and a violence greater than any yet seen".

April 1. Exodus of the Jewish intellectuals. Thousands of Jews go across the frontier into Holland. Goebbels forbids the Jews to take refuge abroad. Goebbels' sadism must never be forgotten.

April 4. All foreigners and non-Aryans are excluded from the liberal professions.

April 6. A cheerful note at last! End of Prohibition in the U.S.A.

April 8. Non-Aryans excluded from all public offices.

Anglo-Soviet tension over the trial of the Vickers' engineers, suspected of sabotage.

May 10. *Auto da fé* of twenty thousand books taken from German libraries and considered "contrary to the Hitler doctrine".

May 11. A follower of the British Labour Party throws the offering placed upon the Cenotaph by M. Rosenberg, German representative in London, into the Thames.

May 12. The Crisis in France gets worse every day. The situation of the artists is appalling. Many of them live in blackest poverty. From 1930 the picture dealers, seeing their profits fall, broke off their agreements with artists or did not renew them. Poverty came; then destitution. The State did nothing and is doing nothing.

Yesterday I went to see a very great personage. We want a fixed sum, two or three per cent of the town-planning budget, to be set aside for mural paintings so that artists would have work whenever a City or State building is put up. Artists are usually proud folk; they don't ask for charity.

The great man roared with laughter.

"Two per cent? Why that's enormous! That's absurd! We have other fish to fry. All the artists have to do is to work!"

"But work is precisely what they are asking for. At this moment the Town or the State could get mural paintings or carvings by the best artists at a very cheap rate." (One had to try to appeal to the man's intelligence.) "There are so many walls built every year that there would be plenty of work for everyone."

"Quite impossible. I tell you that they have only to do as I do: *work*. If I hadn't a job now I would change my profession. They can become labourers. There's no shame in that."

"But there are millions of labourers in France who are out of work! How could the artists find work? Being unskilled they would have to do unskilled labour. And there is unemployment everywhere!"

"Don't you know that there are professions that never suffer from unemployment? Look here! If I were an artist—well, I'd open a bar, a pub. There's always business there. And I'd paint on Sundays, to amuse myself."

And he rose, delighted with himself, with his clear vision, his robust realism, enchanted at the thought that he had, freely and generously, given us his excellent advice.

I have not changed one word of the conversation.

Can you be surprised at our being a bit revolutionary?

May 13. Von Papen: "We will make the world understand why it is that on the 31st of January 1933 the German people struck the idea of pacifism from their vocabulary." He praises the beauty of death on the battle-field, inveighs against the hideousness of dying in bed.

May 14. M. Rosenberg leaves London. Anxiety in England.

May 15. Germano-Austrian tension.

May 22. The Japanese are within twelve miles of Peking. The newspapers decide that the name should be written Pei-Ping.

May 26. The United States go off the gold standard.

May 29. The President of the Chamber, Daladier, says: "The moment is not far off when an active defence of the Republican régime will be necessary."

May 30. The great Jew Einstein, glory of German science, has been compelled to take refuge in Belgium. The Hitlerites

have deprived him of the instruments of his work. In 1930 I visited the *Einstein Turm*, the observatory Erich Mendelssohn built on the outskirts of Berlin, and saw the precious photograph of the eclipse of the sun on which Einstein and his collaborators were working. They were expecting to finish within the next four years the measurements and calculations by which Einstein was to give an experimental proof of his theory of Relativity.

But what is "generalised relativity" to the Hitlerian brains? What matters chiefly to them is to bind the sins of capitalism upon the head of Israel.

It should be said that the French Government has given a very liberal welcome to the German refugees, both Aryan and non-Aryan. They have offered Einstein a chair at the Collège de France. But he is going first to the University of Princeton for a year, then to Oxford where he has an even older engagement. An English M.P. has offered him a house for his lifetime. Einstein said to an interviewer:

"Personality is apparent at all times and in every place, whether in its weakness or in its strength. Even in the exact sciences, a moral deficiency will always remain visible. Through the pages of a scientific book I can see the man who wrote it, his face, his faults of character, the hidden defect that is concealed behind his work. One must be utterly oneself, one must not fail in this for an instant, if one is to sustain the burden of a great scientific work."

A conscientious artist would say the same.

June 6. My article "Something is Happening" appeared in the *Intransigent* to-night. It has to do with the desirability of making works of art accessible to everyone; it shows how certain attitudes of mind have been changed by social circumstances.

Most critics believe that artists have ceased to think or to evolve, that they are marking time until the Crisis is over. And that when prosperity has returned they will get back into their usual little jog-trot. Of the best of them this is untrue, as time will show.

The same critics have been in the habit for a long while now of presenting artists as beings who are entirely outside social life, monsters who have no link and no relation with the rest of mankind, fantastic comets. As though a man could live outside his world, as though he could live untouched by every contact save that of his own mind!

Every work of art that has sufficient value to attract wide admiration has something of the quality of the ancient verse-chronicle. (For the last few years we have mostly been given private confidences.) In the case of the old verse-chronicle, it did not come into the minds of any listener that the author, who was usually anonymous, could be the god-like creator of the work. On the contrary, everyone knew that the author was first and foremost a sensitive and well-equipped "receiver" who had absorbed the various impulses of his time and his world. The author, set in motion by the social waves about him, gave them a form and delivered them again, in their new form, to society. The author was the "maker of forms". Art is a "making of forms". But in the last half-century or so artists have had little or no sense of the waves about them. And without this contact all works of art become selfish, inapt to fulfil a universal need.

The art world had become a group, as it were, of anarchists, men who loudly professed their contempt for their time, who were in open opposition to their epoch, deliberately hostile to the people, seeing the people always as ignorant, unworthy of the least attention.

About the anarchists there gathered a small number of high-souled admirers. The artists committed the grave sin of painting for themselves and for this tiny minority that was, indeed, also themselves, since they had made it in their own image. In this way a completely selfish art was born. It is passing now with the passing of the wealth of the dilettantes, the lonely Court for which it had been made. The audience is of 500 souls. In the whole world there were 500 buyers! That is actually the figure. The artists knew nothing of the others, the rest of humanity.

In 1916, in *Elan*, seeing that Cubism was content to be the art of a small élite, I cried "look out!" In *Après le Cubisme*, in 1918, and again in my book *Art*, in 1923, I gave the alarm. I was much blamed for it. I demonstrated that since the death of Delacroix and Ingres, painting had given up all wish to be of social service, that is to appeal to the people as a whole, and had taken to research-work of the laboratory order, seeking only to increase the artist's rights, to reform his means of work, to discover new forms of expression. This specialised research-work on aesthetic formalism went on for fifty years; it covered the impressionists, the fauves, the cubists, the neo-plastic school and the first purist school, 1918-25, which, dissenting from Cubism, was both a seeking after the principles of form and a protest against the arts of the drawing-room.

In spite of their differences of aspect, these various schools can be said to have had a sort of unity; the idea at the back of their researches was the same. But still the researches were for the painter caste only. All their efforts converged as it were inwards and did not in the least care to be of public service. Think of the Greek temples, of the cathedrals, of all the great moments in the history of art. . . .

As in Science, the arts also must have their laboratories, and every artist should give a measure of his time to the investigations and experiments without which art would be in danger of stagnating, perhaps of dying altogether. (Technique being all that belongs to the means of expression.) The formulae of aerodynamics are the result of abstract work, but to become of social value they must justify themselves by their application to instruments of aviation. Artists nowadays have a great mass of technical and aesthetic knowledge at their command, new means of expression and old means of expression renewed and brought up to date. But so far they have not shown us any work which, while having beauty for the connoisseur and the specialist, is also a work of great human value, that is affecting the whole of mankind, truly useful. . . .

June 10th. What distresses so many artists and makes them cling to the reactionary views is a certain mediocrity in Soviet art and the ignorance of artistic matters displayed by so many political men: so long as the subject of a work is political and fits in with the ideas of their party, they are content. This, of course, is very unfortunate. At a meeting the other night—the political gatherings are going on as keenly as ever; I am there almost every night—I outlined the following ideas:

It is to be hoped that the leaders and the men in power will understand the lesson that the immortal monuments of art teach us, and which is:

Firstly: That an art that tends to be truly social can only be so on condition that it avoids conventional symbolism and uses the one immediate, universal, imperishable language, which is the language that appeals directly to the senses' "constants", and through them to the affective or rational "constants" that are the factors common to all men. Where this condition is observed, art will endure for ever in a society; it will not be a passing, "fashionable" art even if it expresses the living thoughts or feelings of the moment.

Secondly: A great nation should work for civilisation and should leave monuments that will bear witness to its greatness. For this a knowledge of the direct language I spoke of is required. It can be taught. The people breathe their will, their desires, their needs into the artist—their medium, their delegate—but the artist cannot bring to birth the child of the collective will unless he is fully practised in the common tongue. He must learn it. And though in fact many artists use it, very few have gone into the matter deeply enough to teach it.

To sum up: The more society wishes to be universal, classless, the more its art should express itself by universal means, that is by the constants of sensibility, affectivity, rationality that are the common essence of mankind.

The tendency of politicians is to call all art that is not frankly political, selfish, individualistic and bourgeois. But the people cannot be fed exclusively on Marseillaises.

Let us hope that the world's leaders will not forget that there are different kinds of art in each technique, and that all are equally useful.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ART

The Song type. "I want to make love!" cries the nightingale, flapping its wings. "I must sing! I must sing!" The nightingale sings its song. So do a number of other birds, including Mimi Pinson. I would not go so far as to say that, to the song-bird, singing is an art, yet it is certainly the result of a need, as art is a need to man. For art is a need, and the need is father to the useful. Man sings because he knows, as the birds know, that his singing will bring about certain results. He sings to express his own happiness, to please, to prolong his joy or his pain, or to cheat it; to give himself courage; because the Volga boat is heavy or Tipperary a long, long way away; to increase his own strength by the strength of rhythm, making pleasure collaborate with necessity. Even where man sings for his own pleasure, that pleasure is useful to him. And so the song type of art will remain with us for ever.

"I sing my little song," said Corot. "I paint as the bird sings," said (I think) Renoir. "I sing of life," cries the poet. "I adore singing," says Jenny the sewing-girl. Einstein sings of the Universe. . . .

Dancing and singing are the most directly biological of the arts, for that reason they will survive as long as mankind. But dancing or singing, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture—they can all serve social life without losing a tittle of their individual value. Many advance-guard revolutionaries like to think that the art of the Convergent society will also converge towards, be unified in, one art type. A great mistake. They look upon the spontaneous art I spoke of just now as pure individualism and are very much against it in consequence. It is indeed a product of the individuality, but that is not individualism. How is it that so many sectarians of

“historic materialism” fail to see that in every society, even the most firmly centred—all the great periods—art has always been many-sided? And that for the good reason that it must satisfy the various fundamental needs that are part of the essential equipment of mankind.

It might be instructive to look at the Soviet picture exhibitions and see if all the different types of art survive, or if some of them are dying under the new régime. Also to find out what modifications, what new tendencies are being brought about over there.

Two exhibitions of Soviet art have been held in Paris. Their theme was “Russian industrial equipment”. The Soviet Five-year Plan was colossal, the efforts and the sacrifices made for it were deeply moving; its very considerable results—the great dams, the factories that Germany and America might envy—have astonished the world. An historic task. What have the painters whose business it was to glorify that task made of it? Clever water-colours. Dreamy, impressionistic works, conveying little of the enthusiasm that makes young Russia labour so passionately in the fulfilment of its vision of progress. Yet the subjects were well suited to lyrical realism. The giant gasometers, the giant oil-pumps, the giant cranes and turbines—all these are subjects that are of themselves lyrical, splendid in size and splendid in the geometric power of which they are the incarnations. Fine photographs have been taken in Russia of the huge, cellulated wheels of the turbines, designed with just that rigorous sense of geometry with which Nature would have designed the things of our world if she had been a true geometer. The forces that direct the universe have not the vigorous economy, the pleasing regularity that engineers put into their work.

Actually, most of the Russian artists painted the “Giants of Industry” in a manner that would have been suited to water-lilies on a pond or gondolas in Venice.

Our old countries, of course, produce a formidable mass of bourgeois art, fitted to the little needs of our little bourgeoisie. Nevertheless there exists in Paris a considerable group

of artists with advanced views in aesthetics and often in politics. From this special centre—this sort of little principality in the heart of the State—flows the art that is natural to men of free and high aspirations. The art that is natural to this living, nonconformist cell is in direct opposition to the taste of the remainder of French society. Its isolation is at once its weakness and its strength: its weakness in so far as it is cut off from the stream of social life; its strength in so far as it remains uncontaminated by the platitudes of the small bourgeois. Its art is rejected by the bourgeoisie and by the greater mass of the working populations, whose taste has been poisoned by bourgeois taste and by the wrong artistic views of many Left party politicians. The little cell lives indeed in very perilous conditions!

A hostile critic would not fail to say, with truth, that the Soviet's charming factory landscapes are in no wise different from what can be seen in any bourgeois drawing-room. The reason for this odd circumstance can be explained. According to Karl Marx, art, like every other social manifestation, is more or less fatally subject—more, rather than less—to its economic surroundings. Since the U.S.S.R. does not yet profess to be effectively Communist but only in process of becoming a Socialist State, it is clear that Russia cannot yet produce an art that would be radically different from that of our older societies.

To conclude: The subjects drawn from the Five-year Plan did not excite the painters more than any other subject of ordinary importance or unimportance. The artists did not treat their industrial landscapes better or worse than they would have treated a shepherd's cot or three apples in a fruit-dish or any other object submitted to their imaginations or to the transforming powers of their retinas. To them, what they saw became so many opportunities for praising Nature's kindlier gestures towards man, the changing flood of light that she pours upon all things, drowning them in her lovely illusions, transporting them to fairyland. To ride on the waves of the sun's light is one way of escaping from the bondage

of life. The Soviet exhibitions show that their painters conceived their works as means of diverting themselves and their audiences. They did not attempt to vindicate immediate reality. Their art is of the **ART THAT CONCEALS REALITY** category; their pictures give us no more of material reality than what is needed to evade it; they do not show phenomena as plain sight sees them. It is a *fundamentally pessimistic art*, since the artist has found no facts worthy of being shown in their true power. Yet it is *optimistic in its consequences*, since, by the changes he brings to our vision of things, the artist indirectly creates in us an optimistic frame of mind, a frame of mind that inclines us to love the real.¹ The **ART THAT GLORIFIES REALITY** is the only art that gives directly the love of the Real, the only art that makes us love immediate facts, whether natural or social, by presenting them in all the beauty of their reality and by insisting on that reality.

So it is evident that, whatever the social statute, the two modes of lyricism will remain—the lyricism that exalts the real and the lyricism that brings forgetfulness of reality.

(It is understood, of course, that I am referring, not to the low-class art that merely competes badly with the camera, but to the realistic, optimistic art which, based on objective reality, excites one's love for the works of Nature and the works of man.)

And again there is **PROPAGANDA ART**, the burning topic of the moment.

One would have expected to see at the Russian exhibitions a quantity of pictures of social or political propaganda, works intended to make the onlooker give his adherence to this or that action or idea. There were no examples of this type of art at the Paris shows. Yet the *Iskoustvo (Art)*, the organ of the Painters and Sculptors Union, prints mass-reproductions of Lenins and Stalins in historic attitudes, and numberless scenes of Russian history, ancient and modern. The pre-revolutionary

¹ *Note 1937.* What I saw at the Pavilion of the Soviets at the Paris Exhibition 1937 confirms what I said in 1933.

scenes are usually treated satirically, the modern scenes are too often pathetic. An unfortunately large proportion of these pictures and carvings would not be out of place in the Historical Museum of Versailles, or in the Salon des Artistes Français.

On this matter of the "Subject"¹ there is at the moment considerable confusion among revolutionaries of all countries and all shades of opinion. It reigns equally on the Right and on the Left, both sides being, as I have said, inclined to be reactionary in their views on art.

Furtwangler, the famous conductor, wrote bravely to Goebbels:

"I know but one frontier, the frontier that divides good art from bad art. For this reason it should be widely proclaimed that men like Bruno Walter, Max Reinhardt, Klemperer and many others must continue to contribute to the advance of German art."

Dr. Goebbels replied (in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11th April 1933):

". . . I know nothing of your one frontier. Art should not only be good, it should also be national and combative."

Yet it would seem that:

- (1) Art can, in a measure, help in the spreading of ideas.
- (2) Caricatures, historic pictures, military marches, revolutionary songs, plays of action, etc., can have a relatively powerful political effect.
- (3) It would be deplorable, socially, to restrict art to these tendentious and time-serving forms; men and society have needs that cannot be satisfied by them.
- (4) The "political" subject is nevertheless a subject that may be as good as any other (see the work of David). The politicians make the mistake of supposing that the subject is the whole of the picture. This cannot be so. The same political subject can be used for a masterpiece and for a completely

¹ *Art*, p. 262.

valueless work. Which illustrates the truth of Furtwangler's words. The innumerable portraits of Lenin show clearly that while the subject can help in the creation of a masterpiece the result will only be good where there is fine treatment. A mediocre, a bad work can even be dangerous to the ideas and the régime it seeks to praise. There are Lenins and Stalins that might make you sick of Socialism.

No. Art is not and can never be in the scenario alone. Everyone understands this when the art is literature, the theatre or music,¹ but it is not so widely seen when you come to the visible arts. The man who would say that the writing is always good enough provided the story is well thought out, would pass for a fool in everybody's eyes. Yet that is precisely what people say to painters. It is flabbergasting. . . .

(5) A society existing in a certain time, a certain geographical area, a certain historic situation, a certain economic régime, gives off emanations, as it were, that act upon the artist. The emanations transmit the public needs to him. *Their quality depends on the quality of the society.* Their power stirs the artist, directs him if he is a master of his art; if he is not it leads to nothing useful.

(6) No art can be authentically revolutionary before a revolution, or for a short while after. It cannot be so until the new régime has had time to modify the society, that is: to cause it to emit a new and powerful will. A pre-revolutionary art is the art of a small group and, like all small group arts, must be false in professing to be the anticipated model of an art inspired by an as yet non-existent society.

(7) Revolutions, although they can create new intellectual or psychological needs or adjustments, cannot influence man's fundamental constants. The constants that cause a man to be a man. Consequently all the forms of art that are created by our essential needs will subsist under every future form of government. It is granted, of course, that at certain times and in certain political or religious circumstances there will

¹ Note 1937. ". . . a good portrait says everything before you know what it has said." Alain, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, April 1937.

be types of art that the governing bodies will encourage or hinder, thus creating an "official art". This is not necessarily bad. The great works of the great periods were often of an official nature. Ictinos, Michelangelo, David and many others were official artists. But official art can be detestable. It is usually so nowadays because our modern leaders, of the Right or of the Left, seldom have the culture of a Pericles or a Julius II. They put a pressure on their artists that is deplorable, or choose, it would seem instinctively, the mediocre men among them. In any case really great art, art that shows humanity at its highest, is inspired, not by official decrees, but by the pressure of a society that has become convergent through its own collective will. And even then the common passion must have at its disposal great wave-detectors, great artists. The society of Pericles had been made convergent by its love for the City; the Gothic and Romance societies by Christianity. There will be a Socialist art when Socialism functions properly. Till then we shall have only forecasts à la H. G. Wells or artificial stuff as false at the present time as a neo-Egyptian or a neo-Spartan art would be.

Have discovered these lines on an old index-card: "Woe to the politicians who do not value the fine arts. . . ."

What exactly did Voltaire mean by that? It is one of those texts that allow one to feel that its author thought as one thinks oneself. Maiakowsky helps to make it clearer: "All the Soviets will be unable to make an army march if the band does not play."

And even so it must play a beautiful march, that is: a good march.

June 15. The vileness of our own time automatically turns one's mind towards the new Russia. There, at least, they are trying to build a new world, a world rid of the contradictions of private capitalism and of those consequences of private capitalism that we are suffering from—economic crises and the deterioration of culture. A review has been founded to encourage cultural relations between France and the U.S.S.R. Here is a tableau I have made out for it:

DIPTYCH

The Tsar's Empire 1907-1914.

I lived a great deal in Russia between 1907 and 1914. I saw a stupefied country. "Nitchewo—all is vain." Oriental fatalism.

A people terrorised by a ferocious police into the service of a lazy, rotting aristocracy and a privileged class of officials, all spies and liars (tea, cigarettes and bribery).

A people made idiotic by the hollow Tsarist ideal, the humbug popes, the so-called "moral" hypocrisies.

Drunkards. Alcohol: the people's opium.

An army of seedy and pretentious conquests, led by the Cross to conquer heathen Constantinople.

Almost universally inefficient factories. (I visited Motovilikha in 1912, on the eve of the War. High-speed steel was unknown. I saw the first trials made in the presence of gaping engineers.)

A prehistoric agriculture.

Science, literature, philosophy, controlled, paralysed, being considered suspect by those in power. A people kept in ignorance by the "supreme" authorities. When the liberal intellectuals wanted to open libraries of the harmless Tolstoyan sort (love thy neighbour) the police shut them. Compulsory illiteracy.

U.S.S.R. 1917-1933.

In October 1917 young Russia voted for Europe and action as against the passive Orient. The U.S.S.R. is working hard and happily in its evolution toward the Better.

A strong framework of Communists, set firmly for the making of new plans and against relapses. The members of the Party are less privileged than other men.

Man first, as among the Greeks. Belief in material progress, in evolution and intelligence. Ventilated morals, a revived honour.

No alcoholism. As a stimulant: efficiency matches.

A strong army for the defence of peaceful and peace-making Socialism.

One of the finest industrial organisations in the world. It had to be created. For Socialism must be able to make quickly, mechanically therefore, the necessities of life, so as to be able to utilise the time saved by mechanisation. Leisure is needed for the cultivation of the intellect.

A "motorised" agriculture that will give immense returns as soon as Communism has finally broken the individualistic instinct for hoarding.

Compulsory education. A well-equipped, well-nursed, prosperous Science. A literature directed for the time being against the enemies of evolution, but already nearly freed. Rooted in the fertile and virgin soil of an immense nation. The largest book-sales in the world. Myriads of libraries, thousands and

thousands of centres, clubs for study and discussion, training the nation to think.

I used to be sent the academic *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Illustration*. Entire pages were caviared by the State Censorship.

A Censor for retrograde movements only.

A slack, frivolous art.

A reform of art until such time as the new society will have naturally and socialistically brought its own art to birth.

1907-1914. In that desert there was only one oasis: the few thousand rebels, Tolstoyists, intellectuals, advanced reformers, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

1917-1933. Vast work of cleansing and building. A short, fifteen years of preface written during the fighting and in spite of the White Army massacres and the unanimous antagonism of the Capitalist states.

In Oct. 1917 they saved Russia forcibly from the stinking bog in which she lived.

Fifteen years of thrilling and encouraging history. Birth of a nation united in Peace. First page of the great Union of Nations.

June 24. Met Paul Valéry for the first time at Auguste Perret's. He told us the story of his first article:

"It was in 1894. I was twenty-three. Madame Juliette Adam asked me for an essay for her *Nouvelle Revue*. At last, after terrific hard work, I gave her the article. It did not appear. I became annoyed. The lady wept. She said that the beginning of the article was a little obscure. I asked for it back and took the opportunity of making it much longer. That way I should earn more money. Twenty-three years old. . . . Apart from my verse I have never written a line that was not to order. We all have our little vanities. I am waiting impatiently to be asked to write an article in praise of reinforced cement."

". . . Reinforced *concrete*," corrected Perret the architect.

Valéry accompanied his speech with an agreeable play of hands and hair, of smiling lips and eyes. His hair is very long and mobile. Gide is all skull. Valéry is all hair and winking eyelids and fluttering fingers. He hails from Sète.

Perret showed us over his new flat. He pointed out its devices to Valéry, the clever drawers, the secret lamps, the ingenious washbasins. Valéry smiled, approved, understood all the stunts before they were explained to him and thought his own thoughts, no doubt.

Sardou the architect said:

"Valéry understands everything!"

"To order?" I asked.

Jean Paulhan, when I told him of this meeting, said that at the time when the poet Eluard was going almost every day to Valéry's, Valéry showed great interest in my *Après le Cubisme*.

"Would you like to meet Ozenfant?" Eluard asked.

"It's quite unnecessary," Valéry answered. "The whole man is in his book."

A pleasing and satisfying remark, giving one new courage. Do I say that out of vanity? No. Pride.

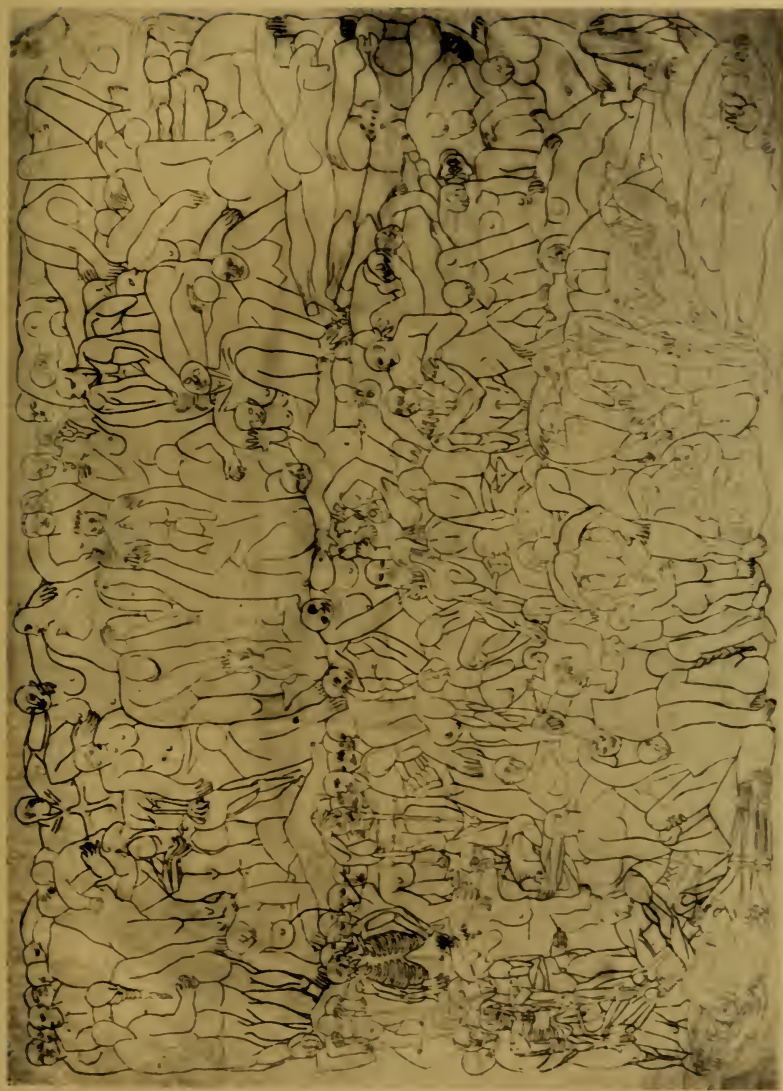
July 29. Goebbels, Minister of the Reich, says:

"Jewry must perish someday. Let it perish now."

One had never before in our day, or even in the days of the Inquisition, which kept at least to the forms of the law, heard anything like this—an official incitement to murder, to the murder of the innocent. It is utterly unbelievable. And yet it is true. A Minister of Propaganda in Germany, yesterday one of the patterns of civilisation. . . .

August 7. Codos and Rossi have linked New York to Bayreuth in a single flight. Balbo's Italian fliers have concluded their fine trip, Rome-New York and back. Does technical progress leave you cold? It should not. A peaceful Union of Nations could make marvels of these inventions. Our only thought is to use them for murder. . . .

August 8. Special jamming stations have been set up in Germany to prevent the people from knowing what is going on abroad. They are jamming Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Paris, Prague, Warsaw, London, etc. Severe penalties will be inflicted on anyone suspected of listening in to foreign stations. New reprisal-camps are being opened every day to new victims of all classes and professions. Here is torture, ending



“ LIFE ” THE FINAL DRAWING

in death; or assassination carried out by a new method—you allow the prisoner to leave the camp and shoot him as he goes. He was escaping. . . .

August 16. That excellent exponent of “pure poetry”, Paul Valéry’s St. Paul, the Abbé Bremond, is dead.

August 17. The dear little war! We have most gloriously taken Djebel Badou from Morocco. Vive la France! Djebel Badou is ours!

August 21. In the U.S.A. President Roosevelt is compelling the big industries to adopt the code of working regulations made by Washington. He has had to overcome obstinate and powerful opposition. The oil magnates have been forced to accept a charter and a code regulating the workers’ wages and conditions of work. The same for the other basic industries, Steel and Coal. The motor industry is also to be given a charter.

This is not Socialism but it is on the way to it.

August 24. The architect Loos has died in Vienna. Loos, the messiah. His theories had an immense influence on the evolution of modern architecture, furniture and manufactured objects generally. He wrote for the *Esprit Nouveau*. This is the heading I put to his famous article “Ornament and Crime”:

“Monsieur Loos is one of the forerunners of the New Spirit. As early as 1900, at the time when the passion for ‘Art Nouveau’ was at its height, in the days of excessive decoration, when art thrust its way everywhere, in and out of season, his clear and original mind saw the futility of the tendency and protested vigorously against it.

“He was among the first to realise the greatness of industry and of the gifts that it would bring to aesthetics, the first to express truths that still seem revolutionary and paradoxical to-day.

“His works, which are unfortunately too little known, show him as the prophet of a style that is only now being developed.”¹

¹ *L'Esprit Nouveau* No. 2: November 1920.

Loos demonstrated very wittily that "ornament gradually disappears as culture and the processes of manufacture improve". I shall speak of him when I come to write my memoirs.

September 10. A Social-Democrat manifesto in Austria:

"The working class is determined to defend Austrian independence not only against the attacks of German Fascism but against the Fascism of the Austrian Heimwehr."

It seems that a Push is expected from the latter quarter.

September 22. Judgement has been given on Van der Lubbe, the scapegoat of the Reichstag fire. An unpleasing person but not a Communist—the trial revealed that clearly. Thanks to him, the Hitlerites have been able to torture, imprison and massacre a great number of democrats.

September 23. Trial of Dimitrov in Leipzig.

November 4. Monsieur Painlevé, French scientist and statesman, buried in the Panthéon.

November 9. Public funeral of Dr. Roux, who was Pasteur's favourite associate even before the discovery of the anti-rabies serum. Later, Roux discovered the existence of toxins. Until then it had been supposed that the diseases caused by microbes were the direct consequences of the microbes' action. His work became the foundation of serotherapy. Still later, he discovered the serum against diphtheria and the serum against tetanus. He lived like a hermit, "loaded with honours".

November 19. Journey to Oxford. In my next book I will tell the story of how I first and rather strangely "set foot" in the admirable English land. I say "set foot" foolishly and literally. In earliest childhood, standing beneath Napoleon's column on the Boulogne cliffs, I saw the British coast, outlined faintly beyond the sea that I was also discovering for the first time . . .

November 25. Mass-produced Art and the People. Mr. But has come back from his holidays beautifully sunburnt. He

has been motoring round the country and is greatly worked up at the moment over Old France. Why should his opening remarks on the subject be so silly?

"It is difficult to adapt oneself to the town again after one has seen the prodigious number of churches, the perfect masterpieces that French hands have built in every village. . . . This machine-made stuff is offensive!"

"Of course the monuments and the carved work, the figures and ornaments of our old builders and sculptors were admirable. But how can you compare the old wheelwright's cart with our lovely modern cars! Come now! When an article is manufactured in large quantities, the cost of making, the expenses in plant and in engineers' time, is spread over the whole output. In this way the big motor firms are able to offer us a low-priced car complete with body that is nevertheless beautifully constructed. Like yours, Mr. But. You may remember that in 1918 the chassis was usually sold alone. Its costume had to be 'made to measure'. And the costume did not always, did not often fit. Look at the picture-papers of the period. And the mass-produced chassis was frequently much less expensive than the body. . . .

"The current notion, which you so often express——"

"He's off again," said Mr. But, smiling good-humouredly.

"—the current notion is that all mechanical, standardised work is necessarily worse than work that is done by hand. Which is absurd."

"I thought I was in for it!"

"The machine is only fitted for mass-production. The excellence of the quality that it can attain is measured by the talent of the man who made the original model. It is not the principle that is at fault when you get carelessness and fraud in mass-produced articles; carelessness and fraud come in with commercial competition. The fundamental virtues of printing are based on the principle of multiple reproduction by the machine. Plantin's finest work is a result of this principle, in the same way as the abominations you often see nowadays.

"It is a strange thing that painters should scrupulously avoid a method that brings one very near perfection in other directions——"

"Oh!"

"Certainly: *Manufacture*. The secret inventive processes of the artist mind are profoundly mysterious. Every artist could write himself down an 'inventor manufacturer'. Yet nowadays he looks upon the idea of selection as unworthy of him. He produces 'unique pieces' only. And that in spite of the well-known fact that in all industry, especially where articles requiring accurate finish are concerned—and art must be accurate—the first products are always partly botched and that a lot of essays and adjustments are necessary. But what does the artist do? Mostly sketches, schemes. If he repeats himself—because he is sterile or because he is successful—he forces himself and 'changes something'. Now, either the sketch was as perfect as the talent and the care of the painter could make it, and in that case it should be copied as a good technician would copy it: exactly; or else the painter could have done better, in which case he should have perfected his model before he stopped work on it.

"But the collector wants a picture that is both unique and as like as possible to other successful pictures by the same artist. So the painter is asked to solve the ridiculous problem of doing the same and yet not the identical thing.

"Months, sometimes years of study and experiment are needed to perfect the simplest piece of mechanism. A picture is a prodigiously complicated machine, yet it is usually done in a few hours. I have known painters who turned out a hundred 'pictures' in the year. A lot of recent 'contracts' insisted upon four canvases, four foot by three—or four by two and a half if you like!—a month. Sheer madness. Chardin painted two or three pictures yearly. But they were perfect. It's true that folk called him lazy. The idea that an artist is a laying hen and should be judged by the quantity and the variety of his eggs is not particularly new. What masterpieces the great 1870-1925 years would have given us if each artist

had only painted three pictures a year, even though they had gone on making accurate copies of them. . . .”

“But in this case the process of selection,” said Mr. But, “is not at all the same. It is the artist who becomes more perfect, and as he improves, his pictures improve.”

“The engineer also improves. Yet everyone of his new works is always a half failure. The master-artists were only too well aware of how cruelly long and minute the work of adjustment could be. But they took the time that was necessary to conceive and to make, to make well, to perfect, to complete.

“I know that mass-produced painting is impracticable at the moment. Our present economic life forbids it, and consequently no artist is able to consider the possibility. But I hope that, in a future régime, payment for a picture that is a truly perfected original will be in terms of its quality—just as high prices are paid nowadays for the fine models of a car, an aeroplane, an instrument, a machine. National studios will reproduce and bring out the work under the direction of the author. The originals will be placed in museums.”

“And what about the subtleties of the ‘personal touch’?”

“And the ‘happy touch’, and the ‘master’s touch’! Baa! Baa! Baa! The greatness of a work has never, at any period, depended on qualities that could not be copied. Neither the Sumerians, nor the Egyptians, nor the Greeks, nor the Byzantines, nor the Romans, nor the Goths, nor the Flemish ever produced work that could not be copied. At least in their own times. Craftsmanship has become astoundingly clumsy nowadays. What is difficult to copy is the bad picture painted haphazard; it is always hard for the hand to imitate a chance stroke. The masters were creative minds of a high order and also artisans who were clever at their job and proud of it. But there were plenty of lesser masters, plenty of plain artisans, who were quite as skilful as the masters and could have copied the masterpieces with absolute accuracy. The masters, in fact, had studios, pupils who helped them, who painted or carved replicas of their work. Any variation that the master gave to his original was an improvement, not a bait for collectors.

"The thing that counts, the thing that is inimitable, is the quality of invention. That is where genius lies. Michelangelo was certainly less skilful than Benvenuto Cellini; the little artist who was such a great technician would have thought nothing of making facsimiles of everything Michelangelo did.

"Unfortunately at the moment, men are content to 'have genius', and to paint as often as not like infants. (Actually there are some adorable children's pictures, but the adult cannot be expected to have a child's peculiar gifts.)

"Again: If we really set out to look for mechanical or semi-automatic processes, some modern Gutenberg would very soon find them. Processes of this kind would do about eighty per cent of the work, and the master would do the rest 'by hand'. This was done in typography as long as the machine-work remained inferior to the hand-work of the calligraphers and limners. But who would think of touching up by hand a page of Draeger's printing?

"Many people will find my suggestions odious. Or absurd. We are still—or we are again—deep in Romanticism.

"So I must ask you: Why should the painter be denied a right that every sculptor enjoys? All sculptors reproduce their works in series (more or less restricted series, pandering more or less to the solitary vices of the collector). Some of them—Maillol for example, although his work is so sensitive, so delicately careful, so finely modelled—will give you as many casts as you care to order. And they are perfectly right!

"Why should the painter be denied the engraver's privileges? Why should the painter be denied the writer's privileges, the musician's?

"A man who would be rich enough to buy up the entire rights in an important literary work so as to keep it to himself, would seem to you a monster, wouldn't he? And the man who bought up a fine symphony and refused to let anyone hear it but himself, would be altogether odious? These things were done in the days of the Patrons, but the time for them is past.

"And especially! Why should the people not enjoy great painting? A unique work is necessarily costly—the artist must

live. But there has always been a trade in fraudulent copies. I hope a time will come when every man will be able to buy an authentic work quite cheaply. A work that would be a copy only in the sense that two bronze casts of the same statue are copies, or two examples of the same book, two engravings from the same plate, two cars of the same series, two records from the same matrix, two prints from the same negative. These are not really copies, they are identical duplicates. Great art should become an object of wide consumption. The demand for it is there and could be enormously developed."

"M'm," grumbled Mr. But. "I'm very much afraid that if the People want art you'll have to bring art down to their level, give them rather mediocre stuff, in fact, before they'll buy it."

"There can be no question of that. On the contrary, the point is to raise the people to the level of art by never offering them anything but the highest quality. That way they will be compelled to buy it! The crime of the manufacturers, the 'producers', the managers, the publishers, the directors of newspapers and wireless stations, theatres, halls, galleries, is precisely that they have encouraged bad taste in order to make money. Bad taste is kept alive by the muck caterers. To their filthy minds, 'popular' means stupid and in bad taste.

"No doubt the people often buy quite detestable things, but then the local shops, the only shops they have time to go to, offer them nothing that is not ugly—usually nothing that is not made ugly expressly for the purpose. Go and see the shop-fronts in the Avenue d'Orléans or the Avenue du Maine or the Avenue d'Italie, or in the streets of Saint Denis, Ivry, Puteaux. They deserve to be broken up wholesale.

'One would sometimes think,' Engels said in 1890, 'that our gentlemen believe anything is good enough for the people.'

"And the middle classes? The middle class has plenty of leisure; is its buying always in the best taste? Nine times out

of ten, is a middle-class room better furnished, apart from the actual cost of it, than a workman's room? The bourgeois has imposed poverty and lack of culture on the people; he has not got those excuses himself. Where the price is the same, working-class wives nearly always buy the prettiest dress, the prettiest hat. Working-class men always know a good motor-bike, a fine car, a beautiful instrument when they see one. But I need not go on. What I'm saying is self-evident.

"That is why I am not afraid that art will suffer from the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', if it is a real dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . I am much more afraid of the commercial dictatorship that our 'art contractors' impose on the people. It is not the proletariat that refuses to have the good films, it is the managers of the picture-palaces. Moreover, if only good films were shown, the people would soon educate themselves up to them, for they can't do without films now. When that has happened, one will meet, at Mr. So-and-So's cinema, besides Mr. So-and-So's usual customers, the men one so seldom sees there now, the men of taste. At the moment Mr. So-and-So, brothel-keeper, thinks he is a very clever fellow. So do the film-producers."

"The advanced films were always fiascos," said Mr. But.

"And the public were quite right. Studio experiments are not the public's affair. They are our business, the business of the professional. The public are the 'users'.

"Yesterday I was at the Montrouge Palace, in the heart, you know, of a working quarter. Before the interval, the usual 'trailers' from next week's big picture were thrown on the screen. I don't know what 'A beautiful night' is like. All I saw was a ham actor kissing an ecstatic female on the lips. The public hooted and jeered at the ravishing gentleman and his ravished beauty as loudly as they jeered at Herr Hitler's little moustache.

"After that we saw Charles Laughton in 'The Private Life of Henry the Eighth'. The house was cram-full and enjoyed the show extremely. So it must be supposed that the samples of this excellent picture, shown the week before, had pleased

the audience. The fools, therefore, were the men who had thought it clever to show the silliest passages in their coming programme to attract that same audience. Or is that they liked those passages themselves? I guarantee that when the first shots of the Haardt-Citroën expedition across Asia (An Eastern Odyssey) are put on, there'll be plenty of proletarians the following week at the Montrouge Palace!

"Look about you, Mr. But. See things honestly, Mr. But.

"Are the novels that delight your Ladies-and-Gentlemen any better than the serials in the big popular dailies?

"The people's taste is the taste that we have given it. And everything has been done to make it bad. They have no prejudices—until they have been given them.

"On my way to Oxford last week I had to spend a night in Boulogne; the boat wasn't sailing. It was so cold that, coming out of the station, I at once dashed into a little fisherman's pub. I dined off a dish of mussels served on a bare table. Out of a noisy electric gramophone oozed the oleaginous hiccups of a Puccini-tenor. Sailors were drinking, eating, playing the game that is so oddly known as 'Russian billiards'. I read the local paper's detailed description of the misdeeds and atrocities of the 'cruel and devastating tempest' that was blowing outside.

"I pricked up my ears. It wasn't—it couldn't be—but yes, it was Satie! The 'Petites pièces montées', one of the rare modern pieces that hold their own after Johann Sebastian.

"One of the sailors rested his cue, stood stockstill, listened. When the piece was over he said in his singing Boulogne voice:

"'I say, guv'nor. That's a good 'un. I like that. Shove it on again. I like that! Who's it by?'

"'Dunno . . .'

"The boss took the record to the single bulb that hung over the table. He put on his glasses and read the label slowly:

"'Erik Satie. D'you know him? No? Must be an American. One of their jazzbands, probably. You want it again? I'll put it on for you.'

"They all listened, and they were all pleased.

"Mascagni came after, and they liked that too. One must not expect too much.

"I asked the pub-keeper why he had chosen Satie. He told me that the gramophone had been sold with fifty 'assorted' records. So it must be supposed that, since Satie is going so cheap, his work is selling badly. But in what class of society is it selling badly? Was it recorded for the proletariat?

"I have great faith in mechanical recording; it will teach the people to feel, to understand, to love.

"Francis Dorset has said very truly (in *Radio Magazine*): 'In our civilisation, industry does not only fashion the things it sells, it fashions the buyers in the image of the things for sale . . .'

"Think of the admirable part that the heads of the recording factories, the heads of the Wireless and of the Press could play as initiators, instructors But it is quite evident that a well-inspired, competent dictatorship must first impose its will on them.

"For, once again, it is not a matter of bringing art down to the People. That would be doing them a great disservice. TO SERVE THE PEOPLE IS TO ENLIGHTEN THEM".

December 31. News from Germany, Austria and China is heart-breaking, from Italy depressing, from Spain not at all reassuring. Even in Ireland Fascism is active. General O'Duffy's Blue Shirts are making trouble. The General has been arrested and set free again. The democracies are weak. . . .

One is saddened, too, by the tale of an appalling railway-smash at Lagny. Two hundred dead. And to shed a little brightness on the scene a large-scale swindle has just been discovered. It is rumoured that a number of prominent French politicians are implicated. The last straw. . . .

Ring down the curtain on 1933, the tomb of German Culture.

(H.B.)

BOOK III

1934

OPTIMISM AND UNITY

FIRST FLOOR

THE FACTS

FASCISM IN EUROPE

- Jan. 8. *Monsieur Garat, Deputy, and Mayor of Bayonne, arrested. Suicide of the financier Staviski. Resignation of the Minister for the Colonies, Dalimier, who was in touch with the crook Staviski.*
10. *Arrest of Deputy Bonnaure. Execution of van der Lubbe, scapegoat of the burning of the Reichstag—continuously drugged during his trial. The responsibility for this fire, organised by the Hitlerites, had to be thrown on the Communists, Socialists, Democrats.*
11. *Affrays in Paris near the Chamber of Deputies, led by the Camelots du Roi.*
12. *Commission of Inquiry into the Staviski Affair.*
14. *Lord Rothermere in open sympathy with Sir Oswald Mosley's Fascist movement to combat "the Socialist and Communist peril".*
22. *Demonstration by the Action Française. Aggravation of the Staviski Affair. Highly-placed personages are implicated, or suspected of being so.*
27. *Resignation of M. Raynaldy, Keeper of the Seals; Resignation of the Chautemps Ministry. Violent demonstrations in Paris.*
29. *M. Doumergue, former President of the Republic, living in retirement at Tournefeuille, refuses to form a Ministry. Daladier Ministry. In the Reichstag Hitler boasts of having unified Germany.*
- Feb. 3. *In Paris M. Chiappe, Prefect of Police, is superseded, and appointed Resident-general in Morocco. M. Thomé,*

director of the Sûreté Générale, is appointed Managing director of the Comédie-Française. The Ministers Jean Fabry, Pietri, Doussaint, immediately resign.

4. *M. Renard, Prefect of the Seine, makes common cause with M. Chiappe and resigns. The Conseil Municipal, the majority of which is of the Right, cancels the banquet to which the President of the Republic and the members of the Government had been invited.*
5. *A violent manifest of the reactionary Conseil Municipal protests further against "the decapitation of the prefectoral administration of Paris and the Seine". In fact the municipal councillors of Paris are trying to impose their will on the Government of the State.*

February 6, 1934. Last night the light suddenly failed. What has happened? The telephone has broken down. Revolution? Went up on to the roof to see if there were any fires. It was only a breakdown, apparently. Slept badly.

Painting. Not too steady. Although my studio is far from the heart of Paris, in a quiet street unaffected by the life of the centre, I am restless. A great effort of will is necessary before I can concentrate on my picture.

We have been living in a state of tension for many days; the air we breathe reeks of scandal. Feverish with disgust. Every evening the *Camelots du Roi* make a racket in the neighbourhood of the Chambre, booing the Deputies. The Staviski scandal has gone to people's heads. The whole of Parliament is muddled with the mud of the few who scold themselves to the crook. Obviously the Right is preparing a *coup de force*. The *Croix de Feu* are restless, and talk of imitating Hitler—setting fire to the Chamber of Deputies. Sensational rumours are going about. The Reactionary Press is publishing articles of unheard-of violence against Parliament, inciting to a "liberating", a "purifying" outbreak. We read that Staviski was assassinated by order of the Government to remove an awkward witness to the jobbery of public men. The Frenchman, shrewd by nature, priding himself on swallowing nothing

without ripe reflection, laps down scandal more easily than anybody else.

They say the Police is not sound. Its chief, the Préfet de Police Chiappe, who is suspected of conspiracy, has just been superseded as head of the Police, and appointed Resident-general in Morocco. The Right shrieks blue murder. M. Chiappe, with much noise and fury, refuses his high post in the Colonies. They say he threatened the President of the Council, M. Daladier, over the telephone, saying that he "would put on mufti and come out into the street with his men". Certain ministers of the Right, making common cause with M. Chiappe, tender their resignation, and so does the Prefect of the Seine, Renard. An odd notion on the part of the Government: having pensioned off the managing-director of the *Comédie-Française*, it appoints in his place Thomé, the governor of the Sûreté. It is true that at the *Comédie-Française* they were playing a political game by giving Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. The cues of this anti-democratic play, well-adapted to the taste of the moment, are violently applauded every evening by the people who want a *coup d'état*, and fierce demonstrations take place at every performance. In France one should not underestimate these little incidents: they are the barometers of Opinion—and in France it is easy to slip up on a bit of orange-peel.

Great political, anti-Government and anti-Republican demonstrations are announced. The papers have taken upon themselves to give them ample publicity, so that nobody shall be missing from the rendezvous. Last night's *Intransigeant*, for instance, had this:

"Two fresh demonstrations for to-morrow:

"By means of posters and tracts, the *Ligue des Jeunesses Patriotes* announces that it will demonstrate to-morrow, at 19 o'clock, in the Place de l'Hotel-de-Ville, and march thence in procession to the Chamber.

"At the same time the group of the Paris section of the *Union Nationale des Combattants*, which had cancelled the

demonstration planned for yesterday, announces that this demonstration will take place to-morrow, Tuesday, at 20 o'clock, Demonstrators to meet in front of the Grand-Palais, before marching in procession to the Champs-Élysées."

In view of the general tension, we may expect some sharp fighting. I can hear the hawkers in the street crying the mid-day edition of the *Intran*, with that exciting accent that makes the mere shouting of a headline thrilling on great days. A big headline, in the third column, details the programme of the demonstrations:

"DEMONSTRATIONS ARRANGED FOR THIS EVENING

"The demonstrations arranged for to-day—this evening to be exact—will assume a certain importance . . ."

It must be explained that *l'Intransigeant* has preserved the curious habit of dating itself a day ahead. Thus the issue for to-day, February 6th, is dated Wednesday 7th. Please note the care this paper takes to state definitely that it is *this evening*, unmistakably, that people are to demonstrate, and to give minute details of the meeting-places:

"Les Jeunesses Patriotes and the members of the *Solidarité Française*, headed by their chosen leaders, have arranged to meet at 19 o'clock in the Place de l'Hotel-de-Ville, to 'tell the Members of Parliament clearly what they think'.

"The *Croix de Feu* and *Briscards* are convened for 19 o'clock in front of the Petit-Palais.

"The members of the *Union Nationale des Combattants* (12,000 adherents in Paris and the suburbs) are to meet at 20 o'clock in the Cours-la-Reine and Avenue Victor-Emmanuel III. The *Camelots du Roi* have issued this appeal to all students: 'One need not be active members of a group to be disgusted by the present appalling scandals. They are

a condemnation of the system and those who live by it.' The *Camelots* will meet at No. 30, Boulevard Saint-Michel at 18 o'clock. *L'Action Française*, again, has convened all its adherents 'at the closing hours for workshops and offices' in front of the *Chambre des Députés*.

"*Les Anciens Combattants Corses* announce that they will join the members of the *Union Nationale des Combattants*.

"Lastly, *La Confédération Nationale des Contribuables* has invited its members to join, 'according to their political affinities, personal preferences, or facilities of transport, any one of the movements taking place in Paris on Tuesday 6th inst.'

"On the other hand the committee of the *Confédération Nationale des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de la Guerre* has voted an Order of the day of which we give the text elsewhere.

"Whatever happens, Paris seems destined this evening to live through hours, of which the least one can say is that they will be stormy, if not grave.

"One can understand that the Government should have taken the sternest measures, in order that these demonstrations, scattered over such diverse and widely separated points of the capital, may not assume an unexpectedly serious character. [Read carefully.]¹ As a measure of elementary precaution, the railings round the trees—so useful for short-circuiting tramway cables—have been removed from the main boulevards and elsewhere. The trees and the seats, however, have been left."

These last lines suggest that it will be necessary to bring arms.

Of course the newspaper avoids giving a rendezvous to the parties of the Left and the Extreme Left, the *actual* supporters of the régime. Note that *l'Intransigeant* is a moderate journal. The papers of the right are of course firebrands; but they only reach the hotheads. Hence it is illuminating to observe

¹ Author's note.

the attitude of *l'Intransigeant*, which is read by almost all Parisians, and whose action is therefore extremely effective.

The leading article of *l'Intransigeant*, "L'Emotion de Paris", begins thus:

"The great emotion by which Paris is shaken is born of the feeling that an injustice has been committed . . ."

This refers to M. Chiappe. Can one imagine a people rebelling off its own bat, in order to retain or avenge its Prefect of Police?

The President of the Council publishes this appeal:

"The Government appeals to the calm and the prudence of the Parisian population.

"Professional agitators have encouraged belief in the most improbable rumours. No movement of troops or material has occurred.

"But political groups and associations of ex-service men have arranged to demonstrate to-day.

"The head of the Government, himself an old soldier, begs his war comrades not to associate their claims with politics, he begs them not to take part in demonstrations incompatible with calm and dignity.

"In any case the Government, which is responsible for order, will know how to maintain it. DALADIER."

Evidently the Government is prepared for something serious.

Six o'clock. I try to read, as best I can. For at every moment I go to the telephone to try and get news. None of my friends are at home. The wireless, continuously turned on, says nothing. The evening papers are not yet out.

I wait impatiently for the return of my wife, who is at work in Paris. Here she is at last, highly excited. She "has not seen anything, but the people she met were all anxious—gloomy or loquacious". Some were going to the Concorde with their War revolvers. All Paris is awaiting the lightning, as when a storm gathers in the increasingly stifling atmosphere.

One feels at once an obscure, primitive dread of the thunder-bolt and a hope of the explosion that will put an end to the intolerable crescendo of strain.

Towards six o'clock something like an electric shock goes through me.

Is it the paroxysm of this long irritation?

At all events it is a sort of fever, burning, painful, but *active*. Let's have dinner, quickly. We *must* go out.

We leave the bus at the Chappe crossing. Many excited groups. People wander up to a group, then pass on to another, without joining in. You feel there is a bond between these people—their common enthusiasm—and at the same time the fear that "the other fellow" may be on the wrong side.

We walk down the rue du Bac. Near the Quai d'Orsay station a bus has just burnt itself out. We cross the Seine and walk along the quay towards the Concorde. Buses on fire.

Motors tear past. Many squads of militia. At the corner of the quay and the square, under the Orangery, I hear a young militiaman say to a comrade:

"I've emptied at least six cartridge-clips."

It is only then that we learn the tragedy which has just occurred. The demonstrators made an assault on the Chamber of Deputies, and were all but successful. The first barrage was overcome; there was fighting on the bridge leading to the Chamber. The Deputies were sitting.

We meet the sculptor Zadkine in the rue Royale, where a big café has been transformed into a field hospital. Civilian cars are continually bringing in wounded.

Many dead? Numbers are mentioned. Some speak of tens, others of hundreds. Here is blood. Bullet marks. The fever seems abated. The crowd is silent, thoughtful. Now that their nerves have calmed down, people have nothing to say. They avoid each other. No newspapers to be had. Crossing the Place de la Concorde, big columns of ex-servicemen singing the *Marseillaise* are heading for the Champs-Élysées, and absorbing other columns from which the *Internationale*

solemnly ascends. I make a note of this on my return home, wondering what to-morrow has in store.

February 7. A long morning. Extremely on edge. Woke too early. Impossible to go to sleep again. Read the papers. The rioting broke out again last night, grew violent towards half-past eleven, and lasted till half-past one in the morning. More than once the Chamber was all but taken. Some of the rioters set fire to the Ministry of Marine. There was actually a great number of killed and wounded. The hospitals overflowed; they had not enough beds. They could only attend to the wounded whose injuries were not too complicated, say my hospital-doctor friends. I don't ask for details.

Yesterday twelve municipal councillors, "*sash across the breast and Councillor's insignia in the buttonhole, placed themselves, upon coming out of the Hotel-de-Ville, at the head of a procession*", to go to the Chamber and "*demand*", in force, the resignation of the Government—and got themselves bludgeoned. Which makes the newspapers of the Right cry "*murder!*"

The Press, all but the Republican Press, calls loudly for the resignation of the "*Ministry of the Left*", which, *having given orders to fire "on the crowd, on patriotic Frenchmen whose will was to save their country, cannot be permitted to remain in power"*.

All the same, speaking seriously, could M. Daladier allow the Deputies elected by the nation to be massacred?

During the battle, after a somewhat tempestuous sitting, the Chamber supported the Government by 360 votes to 220.

G . . . rings up to say that a Senator-Minister had told him on the 4th February: "*If there were actually a party in France sufficiently organised, THEY would let it get through.*" "*Unfortunately,*" in the opinion of the minister, "*that would mean anarchy.*"

G . . . fancies I have no very definite political opinions, and shouts:

"You know, my dear fellow, I believe we're in for it. La Rocque will take office. To-night's the great dust-up."

The aviator X . . . has just gone by, shouting for all to hear that he is loading bombs, to throw on the Chamber of

Deputies this afternoon from his aeroplane. . . . I know he is a little mad.¹

To the Porte d'Orléans to get a *Paris-Midi*. Sold out. I find one at last by the Lion de Belfort, and glance through it in the little square.

M. Lucain, who in his recent articles has been violently inciting to revolt, writes:

"Many dead and thousands of wounded fell during this tragic evening and night, under the fire of revolvers, rifles and machine-guns . . ."

The articles pour execrations on "the murderous Government", demand its resignation, insist on the dissolution of Parliament, the reform of the Republic, etc.

One knows what that means—a Mussolini, of course.²

Not a word about the underlying causes of the revolt, which are far more economic than political. Astonishing! It is true that those who publish newspapers do not know what it is to be entirely destitute. It is quite characteristic of the Press of the Right that it talks of nothing but politics. One must read *le Populaire* to catch this note of common sense:

" . . . the deep-seated causes of the unrest are unemployment, the present distress, fear of the morrow. . . ."

For years now the people has constantly suffered in material ways; and yet they come and stuff us with this sort of rubbish:

"If everything is in a bad way in France, it is the fault of the rascally Ministers and Deputies who have trafficked in their political mandates for the sake of being maintained by a swindler."

¹ Note June 1934. The aerodromes were prohibited from the 6th, since other aviators, more in earnest than he, had the same intention. Here is the text: "Order of the day. Only the regular aeroplanes of public transport lines will be allowed to go up. All other flights including those of the schools, are forbidden from 10 o'clock to-day, 6th February, until further orders. 'Planes must be kept in locked hangars. The heads of the aerodromes must prevent their departure, if necessary by force.'"

² 1938. In those days they would have been satisfied with a Mussolini. Now, at the end of 1938, these same people are dreaming of a Hitler. Or even of Hitler himself. . . .

I re-read *Paris-Midi* at home. One feels that the paper dare not say all it thinks, all it hopes for. Is yesterday's battle really the beginning of the revolution of the Right, so fervently desired since 1871? I note this sentence:

“ . . . the last word has not been said . . . the day is dawning . . . One feels that it, too, will be heavy with suspense.”

In these grave times one reads the paper even to the advertisements, even to the column headed TO-DAY:

“38th day of the year. Saint Theodore. Sun rises at 7.30. Sets at 16.40. PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE DAY: The eminent lecturer André de Fouquières will give a lecture at 15 o'clock on 'Feminine Fashions from 1800 to the present day', at the Hotel Crillon.”

Yesterday, from the balconies of the Hotel Crillon, foreigners were watching the demonstrations. A woman among them was killed by a bullet between the eyes.

Gustave Hervé, in *la Victoire*, compares Daladier to Louis XVI. . . .

I realise that I was not master of myself yesterday, when, in my studio, knowing nothing of what was going on at the Concorde, I was aware of a wave warning me that at that very instant something serious was happening. Can it be that a wave rises from a passionately moved people? I do not mean the mere “herd impulse”, the thrill one feels when one is part of a crowd, since I was alone. The wave seems to work even at a distance. This force gives one the feeling of being connected with the whole of mankind, by something quite different from common convictions—by a force like gravitation.

I have a feeling that we are living in a period as grave as the mobilisation of 1914.

In point of fact the revolt has been simmering for a long

while. It is easier to see to-day why, among such prodromes to such realities, I found it impossible to finish my mythological *LIFE No. 1*.

L'Intransigeant has just come out. It prints in huge capitals: RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTRY! DALADIER HAS SLIPPED UP IN A POOL OF BLOOD!

We saw the appeals to demonstrators published yesterday by this paper, to those of the Leagues and the party of the Right. Now *l'Intransigeant* says it was the Communists who started the demonstrations yesterday.

In a motor-bus a Senator was recognised and beaten up, because he showed his card giving him the right to free transport. At 15.30 there were fresh riots at the Place de la Concorde.

The Right is calling aloud, as for its saviour, for that old gentleman, Gaston Doumergue, known as Gastounet, former President of the Republic, in retirement at Tournefeuille near Toulouse. It's all they can think of.

At nightfall we go into Paris. Second night of rioting. In the rue de Rivoli, smashed street lamps, broken traffic-signals. The rioters have lighted the gas, which is escaping in tall jets, sinisterly, the whole length of the long street. One might be looking at the old print depicting this street on an evening of the Commune. But to-day it is the Extreme Right which is smashing everything smashable. On the boulevards the newspaper kiosks are on fire.

Here are gangs of well-dressed youths overturning a kiosk before our eyes, and setting it alight. There are also a great many sinister-looking toughs prowling alone or in pairs, looking out for someone to attack; smashing shop-windows, not for the sake of "politics", but for loot. Few policemen about. At the Madeleine there are charges. People knocked down by the bludgeons. The police fire. The Taverne Weber, turned into a hospital yesterday, is full of wounded. In the Place de l'Opera the police are locking up the demonstrators in the Métro. There is a smell of "apache", and of "smart youngster of good family" about. Nothing to suggest the

“militant” of the Left. On the 6th it was quite another matter—the greatness of an anger, blind but sincere. To-day, mere pillaging by cut-throats and the incendiary larking of little squits.

February 8. The Press violently accuses the police of brutality. It's extraordinary! The Press must *want* a revolution, otherwise it would uphold those it is wont to call “Preservers of the Peace”.

Photos in the Press show M. Doumergue, the Saviour, arriving, all smiles, at the Gare du Quai d'Orsay. A godsend, these outbreaks! The president of the Suez Company tears himself away from the delights of Tournefeuille to save the country. “VIVE DOUMERGUE!”

Opening sentence of *l'Intran* :

“This morning, after an excellent night in the train . . . M. Doumergue smiled. His eyes sparkled:

“Ah! I know what you're after. You want to talk politics to me. I know nothing about these things.””

I should rather say he knows nothing about economics.

The rioting here has made people oblivious to the fact that in Austria at this moment, Nazi bombs are exploding pretty well all over the place.

The C.G.T. has called a general strike for Monday, to last twenty-four hours. These are its reasons:

“The administrative commission of the *Confédération Général du Travail* has decided that a general strike, limited to twenty-four hours, shall be declared on Monday, 12th February, against the threat of Fascism and in defence of public liberty.”

February 9. Yesterday was quiet. The Extreme Left announces a demonstration for this evening. The C.G.T. is more explicit:

"The recent scandals, and the people's thirst for justice, have been odiously exploited.

"The rioters have dictated their will, and Democracy is thereby seriously threatened.

"We, the organised workers, repeat that we will not allow robbers and their supporters to be confused with the Democracy."

February 10. The Doumergue Cabinet is formed. Rioting all night. Barricades. Casualties.

February 11. Twenty-four hour strike for to-morrow, and demonstrations organised by the parties of the Left.

February 12. General strike. No newspapers. At three o'clock I was at the Bastille. An immense number of demonstrators, all with grave faces. At the head of the procession, M. Léon Blum, one of the great leaders of the Socialists, and M. Doriot, one of the Communist leaders.¹ No disorder or shouting. A behaviour worthy of this great crowd.

February 13. Bloody disturbances at Marseilles yesterday. In Paris, hardly any. But nearly all the workers and the Civil Service went on strike! This will give the Fascist candidates food for thought. All the same, among that crowd, how many would seize a rifle if a Mussolini were to try his luck? News from Vienna at this very moment. The Social-Democrats rose last week, to bar the way to the threatening Fascism of Chancellor Dolfuss, of Major Fey and the Austrian Hitlerites. They were mown down by heavy artillery, lent, it is said, by Italy. Dolfuss is having people hanged as fast as he can. And yet in Vienna, at the last elections, 70 per cent of the votes went to the Socialists. . . . A thing to remember.

During the evening, Mr. But telephones:

"This is the third time I've rung you up. It's disgusting! Public services ought never to stop! It's a crime against the State! *L'Etat, c'est nous!* And a flabby state it is, too! We've

¹ Note 1936. The same who later turned coat and founded a Fascist Party, allied to La Rocque's.

had enough of it. Let's have a Dictator at once. In Germany the 'phone is ruled with a rod of iron. And in Rome, I can tell you! (He has never been in Rome or Berlin, where the young ladies of the 'phone still reign supreme over many districts.) This 'defaulting' on the part of the Government is really terrible. What about duty? Accepting a post of Civil Servant is like going in for the priesthood. There's a strike. Off they go for a walk. And I can ring till all's blue. Do you consider that right. What next? A Führer! A Duce! Democracy has bitched everything! Daudet is right after all. The King . . . Chiappe . . . ! The people must be crushed . . . ! *I'd* let them have it . . . ! Go it, Doumergue! Send Weygand to 'clean up' the Chamber!"

He blathered furiously for a good quarter of an hour. All the commonplaces I've heard repeated from my early youth by those who in their heart of hearts would really like to have the King back. Mr. But is a fair type of the "grouser". Like so many bourgeois, he was brought up in the belief that when everything goes wrong, it's the fault of the workers, "who insist on being too highly paid, which sends up the price of everything".

He keeps me hanging on to the line. I am half inclined to ring off; but these days one listens to everything.

He must be running up a big telephone bill. But he's got to have his grouse. I have a certain number of friends like him, who ring me up, not to hear what I have to say, but from a need to unburden themselves into the mouthpiece. Then I put on my spectacles, settle myself in my armchair, and reach out for a book. Or I look through some fine illustrations; grunting Yes! Yes! No! No! every now and then, in a tone of interest. Sometimes I say yes or no in the wrong place, and the friend stops short:

"Can you hear me? Hullo! Hullo!"

I collect myself hastily:

"Quite so! You're right! Very right! Yesyesyes!"

He picks up the thread, and I go on with my contemplation or my reading.

But now all of a sudden Sergius rings off. Have I said yes or no in the wrong place?

An hour later I recognise the sound of his jerky step on the pavement. He rings my bell. He has come on foot because the taxis have been on strike since the 2nd.¹

"How bad the 'phone is, really! It's scandalous! I thought I'd rather come round, instead. And no taxis! It's the end of everything!"

"My dear But, the taxis and the 'phone will work under no matter what régime. What frightens me is something very different. Parliament, representing an infinity of contradictory interests, even with the best will in the world, can only apply a little leech here, stick on a little plaster there. Threads snap one after another, and Parliament stops the gaps as fast as it can. It is all for stopping, in both senses of the word. It patches up the past, and stops the course of evolution. And the average Frenchman demands noisily that 'things shall work', while resisting with all his might any change whatsoever in the present social structure. It's a fine muddle. No common line of action. The social-economic engine pants; the misfiring increases. Little spasmodic recoveries carry us laboriously over to the next day. None of them understand that it is no longer a question of changing the Ministry as one changes a broken plug, but that the whole bus is fit for nothing but the scrap-heap, to be melted down."

Mr. But: "Everything is going down. The scarcer money is, the more necessary it becomes, and the more difficult it is to obtain honestly; for everybody grabs the little there is to be had. Individual and social morality sinks lower from month to month! In the business world it's as bad as in public life. Hundreds of public and private men emerge all muddy from glaring financial scandals. The régime, becoming more and more unseemly, breaks wind noisily like some elderly bumpkin, past observing the decencies."

"Grumpy bourgeois though you be, Mr. But, you talk like *l'Humanité*, which said on the 7th February:

¹ A purely sympathetic strike.

'In the rapid decomposition of the Capitalist régime, all their ignominy comes to light. They are all mixed up in these scandalous briberies—Deputies and Senators, Magistrates and Police, Ministers and high dignitaries of the bourgeois State. The indignation of the masses is irresistible; and yesterday the Fascist cliques . . . were able to carry with them large numbers of the infuriated petite bourgeoisie'."¹

Mr. But made no answer. Contrary to his habit, which is to embed himself in my rocking-chair, he forgot his good manners and went off in a huff. Which shows how nervy people are to-day.

However, here he is again. On some sort of pretext, either because he was afraid of having vexed me by his sudden departure, or because M . . ., who lives round the corner, was out when he called, he has come back again.

"All the same, France is a fine and a great country. But it has not the slightest sense of unity of effort."

"You're quite right there. As it happens, the idea is common to-day to all the less stupid members of the Right, the Centre and the Left:

'URGENT NEED OF GATHERING TOGETHER THE SCATTERED AND DIVERGING EFFORTS OF INDIVIDUALS, OF GROUPS, OF THE WHOLE NATION, AND DIRECTING THEM TOWARDS ONE AIM.'

"This agreement of adverse parties on one same necessity is something gained. But although they all converge in desiring convergence,² most of them diverge as to the means of obtaining it. This may be a sign of approaching revolution, since revolutions come when the great majority of citizens are

¹ *Note 1936*. We know how, after the elections of 1936, which were held under the Sign of February 6, the Government of the Front Populaire purged the régime, and thereby consolidated it. It was the revolutionaries who saved the Republic. History is full of these opportunist contradictions.

² *Art*, p. 185 ff.

violently discontented. And above all, when it has become a truism that something is to be obtained *at all costs*. In 1789 it was the idea of Liberty that unified the rebels. Liberty, a vague term, but each one pinned his own hopes on it. *Convergence* is no doubt too abstract a word to constitute a slogan for a banner. So we say Fascism, Socialism, Communism. Actually to-day most Parisians call themselves revolutionaries. The reactionaries first and foremost. But if Parliament and the Elysée had been stormed last Tuesday, and the Deputies massacred by the mixed processions which sang the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale* simultaneously, who would finally have been installed in the President's Palace? No party is sufficiently powerful at present to take the lead without Terrorism.

"There are therefore, in Paris, many sorts of revolutionaries. Let us take stock of them:

"First, the people like you, Mr. But, growling out your irritation, capable of getting yourselves bludgeoned out of sheer peevishness, but not really clear as to what you want to establish; like urchins snivelling because they want something, without knowing what. What *do* you want, But?"

"I want things to work! And I don't want to be bothered! I want decent men in the Government! I want a Leader who is honest! Strong! Who will leave me free to do as I choose! A Leader who will get commerce and industry to work for the prosperity of the country! An impressive Leader, who will make the foreigner respect us! Foreigners are jeering at us!"

"You want a Mussolini?"

"Not at all. I have a horror of Dictators: I'm a Frenchman. All the same I admire Mussolini. . . ."

"Good. You want a strong Leader; and just now you were asking for Chiappe. But do you suppose he would leave you free?"

"Why shouldn't he leave me free? What we want is to have the dregs of the populace kept under."

"You call dregs, a people that is fed up with work which does not lift them above poverty?"

"I have no grudge against the workers! But this general strike is disgraceful! But it is their leaders who are to blame. The duty of a Government is to keep the workers in their place."

"And keep you safe in yours, no doubt?"

"Of course. I'm all for progress, but from the top. For evolution, guided by the hand of a Master. . . ."

"An *ironmaster*."

"Why not? Those men have intelligence, power, a sense of authority, an old tradition. They are civilised beings. Are *they* ever to be seen at the Place de la Concorde or at Belleville?"

"No, indeed! But at the Concorde I've seen troops of poor wretches that the Press run by these gentlemen had incited to go there. Remember the rendezvous so carefully detailed by this Press. They were machine-gunned for their pains."

"Nobody forced them to go."

"Yes, my friend, the Press stirred their sense of honour. They went there in the belief that they were saving the country, when they had been sent there to pave the way for Fascism—the support the big bourgeoisie is looking to."

"I disapprove of all exploiters, whether of the Right or of the Left. France must remain *bourgeoise*! After all, I'm only defending the Revolution of '89, since it put the bourgeoisie into power. The bourgeoisie is alone capable of stemming the excesses of the populace, the dictatorship of the Syndicates and the Communists. Communism! That's the enemy!"

"The bourgeoisie has certainly accomplished great things. But don't you see that to-day it is precisely the privileges of this bourgeois class, its hold on industries and on all the means of transforming and distributing riches and goods, which prevents everything from working? Think a bit: you belong to the category of Frenchmen—an extremely large one—who spit on the Republic, and scream for a revolution, but who, if they are driven into a corner, want neither a Dictator nor a King; still less Socialism, and above all no Communism. You say that yourself. What *do* you want then? At bottom

you would like the *status quo*, as far as the régime is concerned; fewer taxes, a chance of earning money—or more money—and to be able to buy, at last, that dear little car, or that fine big one, you've wanted for so long. You want a 'bloodless' revolution, affording you, personally, much better conditions, without any changes in the situation and privileges you have attained, or even in your regular habits. A comfortable miracle. . . .

"As a matter of fact, a great many simpletons think they have brought about a revolution as it is, because they have succeeded in overthrowing a Cabinet and recalling from Tournefeuille M. Doumergue, that shrewd old parliamentary bird, who hopes, against every decency, to renew his political youth by taking advantage of a wave of anti-parliamentarianism. Many people are proud of having contributed to this 'Revolution' by strolling to the Place de la Concorde, at the instigation of the Fascist papers, 'to see what was going on'. Not realising, apparently, that the rifles of the Republic would be waiting for them.

"*"The programme has been changed. The men have been changed. That's the revolution"*, says a famous ultra-reactionary journalist, M. Bailby, in his paper *Le Jour*. How idyllic!

"No! It is not enough to change men or programmes, so long as men and programmes aim only at preserving the unworkable.

"In reality, Mr. But, you have the dismal, peevish disposition of the Royalists, whom I have heard from my early childhood, young and old, railing like young cavalry officers or senile, grumpy dug-outs, at '*La Gueuse*'."

"You don't offend me in the least," said Mr. But, huffily. "I have a great liking for Maurras and Daudet."

"I had no intention of offending you, my dear But. I myself admire those writers, *quâ* writers, and the sly fox Doumergue not at all. I think their ideas are wrong, and I consider them most unfortunate in being surrounded by a crowd of bright young fellows à la Goebbels, whose one ambition is to disport their little selves on the well-polished

floors of a Court, while their wives drag showy dresses with long trains about the drawing-rooms. They want to stay rich, or to be enriched by their King, and look down their noses at the plebs. There's more in it than that, you know.

"What used to amuse me, when things were less serious, was that Maurras and Daudet should still be spouting such juvenile clap-trap. But their programme is a Fascist one, with a crowned Leader. The crown is the only difference—although, of course, the King of Italy . . . In fact the Royalists are playing into the Fascists' hands. I often went to the Boulevard Saint-Germain during the weeks before the 6th. The Royalists were attacking the Police. Their Programme . . ."

"Is most carefully thought out. Maurras has given his life to it!"

"He'd have done better to write a bit more about Martigues¹ instead of spending whole decades libelling the best of his countrymen, by newspaperfuls."

"Their programme is their strength!"

"And their weakness. For you must admit that it is very definite. Too definite in fact. You can see as clear as daylight that their great idea is: What *has* been, *shall* be; what *has* succeeded, *will* succeed; what *was* suitable is *still* suitable, and always *will* be suitable. Which makes one wonder how kingship, which was an improvement on feudalism, ever managed to get going.

"Corollary: There is no such thing as progress. All this served up in a sauce of romantic frenzy about the past, considered more or less as infinitely superior to the present—provided the past dates from before 1789 at the latest. A

¹ What he wrote on Athens is spoilt by childish nonsense of this kind:

"M. Salomon Reinach was said to have been adviser to M. Cavaddias (Curator of the Antiquities of Greece). You may think what you like of this rumour. Personally, I paid little attention to it. Why shouldn't a pure-bred Athenian have dated his national antiquities without an Israelite as his assistant or his master?" (Ch. Maurras.)

This was written in 1898. It shows that the French Nationalists had already laid the foundations of Hitlerism: Racism, Anti-Semitism—plus a certain baseness.

mixture of recipes for Machiavellian government and furious neophobia. The ideology of the antiquarian: The older it is, the more beautiful it is. Certainly all this, like their abuse, is clearly defined in their programme.¹

"This definiteness is also a weakness. A definite system bares its breast to criticism. Now La Rocque's strength is that his programme, one might say, is infinitely nebulous, while containing all the great words:—Honour, Country, Nation, Probity, Prestige, etc.—which produce the usual reflexes in a lot of good, honest, or merely foolish people. Actually, a reactionary party, in order to gain partisans, should have an appearance of novelty, so as to excite the young, and yet base itself on ideas or sentiments absorbed long ago, to attract the old."

"I like the honest idea of the '*Croix de Feu*'."

"Every Fascist and semi-Fascist has two magic words alternately on his lips: 'We are *realists*', and 'We are *idealists*'. These they hurl at you at every opportunity, by way of contradiction. You can dupe a lot of people like that.

"Third sort of Frenchmen: naïve non-party people.

"*If everybody was nice to his neighbour, all would be well.*"

"These nicey-nicey people form a flabby mass, which gravitates automatically towards the parties of 'THE IDEAL'. You see them round Colonel de la Rocque.² During my

¹ The action of the *Action Française* was strangely repudiated in 1937 by the Pretender to the throne of France, after having been disavowed by the Pope during Briand's administration.

² *Note 1937.* During the lawsuit of October 25th, 1937, La Rocque *v.* Pozzo di Borgo (his former lieutenant in the *Croix de Feu*), M. André Tardieu made the following statements (I quote from the newspaper *l'Oeuvre*):

"M. Tardieu: I am merely a witness as to character [*sic*]. From July 1926 to May 1932, except for two short interludes, I was a member of the Parliamentary Council. During those six years I was in touch with M. de la Rocque. For eighteen months, at the repeated suggestion of a high military personage, I allowed him to visit me, at a time when I was Minister of the Interior. I received him in his capacity of President of the Association of the *Croix de Feu*.

At his third visit M. de la Rocque asked me for money.

I was glad, in the interests of order, to have a force to oppose to the Communists."

The truth is that at this period M. Tardieu was on the look-out for a gang with which to bring about a *coup d'état*.

"M. Tardieu: M. de la Rocque asked to be allowed to deal exclusively with me, and that I should not receive him at the Ministry of the Interior. . . .

lifetime one has seen them run after '*Boulangier, the Handsome, Brave General who will save France*'. One has seen them wanting to shoot the innocent Dreyfus in the name of honour, of the Army and of *La Patrie*. They gathered round Déroulède, the patriotic songster, whom I caught sight of during his exile at St. Sebastian, towards 1903, at a bull-fight, which he was watching, hollow-eyed and eagle-nosed. I was seventeen. It was my first sight of any political celebrity, and I gazed at him with great curiosity. Moreover, it has just come back to me—I had forgotten it for thirty years—Déroulède visited the school where I was studying in Spain, and presented each pupil with a signed copy of his little book of patriotic and

He used to come and see me at home. . . . I gave him money each time he came, from hand to hand. In eighteen months he came twenty-five or twenty-six times in this way to my house in the Avenue de Messine. . . . When I again became President of the Council, at the beginning of 1932, I saw M. de la Rocque again, and he took the opportunity of asking me for a considerable increase. I paid him 70,000 francs. *I asked him several times to prevent disorder.*

(By which it may be understood that he was to demonstrate against the Republican régime.)

M. Tardieu: It is only fair to say that he was always punctual in doing so. On sending me what he called in military terms his 'report', M. de la Rocque would promise to do better next time.

. . . *M. de la Rocque behaved like a good servant.*

RETURN OF M. PIERRE LAVAL

M. Tardieu: My friend M. Pierre Laval was returning from Germany. I feared demonstrations at the Gare du Nord. I warned M. de la Rocque. That day, I may say, M. Pierre Laval received the most enthusiastic welcome of his career."

And now for the letters:

"*M. Tardieu:* I happen to have kept about thirty of them. They are full of M. de la Rocque's affection and submissiveness towards me—which was somewhat unusual on the part of a man one had only met once at the Ministry of Agriculture.

He was concerned for my health, my need of rest. His lady-collaborators sent me flowers, and after my speech at Giromagny one of them wrote that she thought it so perfect, it seemed to her a proof of the existence of God.

Finally, M. de la Rocque himself wrote to ask on what day and at what hour he might, inverted commas, 'come and take orders from me', inverted commas."

This shows that we were not exaggerating in 1934, when we said that the Right was preparing a *coup d'état*. Actually, a statesman in office was paying a leader of faction with the money of the Republic.

The union of the parties of the Left, including the Communists, brought about the failure of the plot, and saved the Republic.

If M. Tardieu is now giving M. la Rocque away, is it because M. la Rocque didn't bring off the attempt of the 6th February, by which M. Tardieu, his fellow-conspirator, hoped to benefit? And is he now accusing la Rocque to avoid being himself accused of conspiracy?

remarkably ridiculous songs. M. de la Rocque's speeches resemble them. Lack of art is dangerous to mediocrity. I've seen la Rocque on the screen; he has something of Déroulède about him. Save us from this sort of saviour!"

"La Rocque has an ideal of his own! He has a great many supporters—a lot of ex-service men, all brave men and good fellows like their Leader."

"Of course, more's the pity. But he himself seems to be only a political puppet in the hands of reactionary forces; ultimately in the hands of Money, which always gives a little of itself to the agents entrusted with the maintenance of its sovereignty.

"FASCISMS are simply attempts at the consolidation of decaying Capitalism by the Nationalist ideology and the police force placed at its disposal. These artificial 'systems' are doomed sooner or later to failure. They suffer from the same irreconcilable contradictions contained in the very System which, either by violence or casual patching-up, they seek to preserve. The illusory pseudo-Socialism of Messrs. Hitler and Mussolini.

"The most clear-headed revolutionaries of to-day think like the banker who said to me yesterday:

"I am a Fascist because I know Capitalism is doomed. All we can do is to play for time. If only we could make it last out our day!"

"Exactly! *Après nous le déluge*. You know the usual consequences. The Deluge arrives, sure enough. And sometimes sooner than we feared."

"I don't follow you in the least," said Mr. But. "Just now you were talking of the need to make all the efforts of the country converge. For once I agreed with you! Fascism—the word expresses it—is surely a means of binding the energies of the country in one bundle, of giving an energetic 'convergence' to the country?"

"I grant you the word expresses it. But you have yet to be sure that the aim offered to a nation is a *progress*. Now what are they doing in Italy, in Germany? Tyrannising, brutalising, electrifying the nation, and giving it War for its object, its

ideal! Fine progress, as you see!¹ Is it enough to graft Fascist monkey-glands on to an antiquated social organism, in order to bring about a prosperity sufficient for the normal needs of the people? No, of course not. So then? The people are prepared, by force of lies, for war. That keeps it busy. Objectors are terrorised, interned or executed. That'll teach 'em."

Here Mr. But brings out a notebook he has always with him, takes a slender pencil from the back of the binding, makes a painful attempt to write with it; and as usual the point breaks. I pass him my good fountain-pen. He makes a note (no doubt he will sling it at me by and by, as though by chance): "*Russia.*"

"Ever since I've known you," I said, "I've seen you hanging on firmly to that ridiculous little pencil that won't write. What a Conservative you are!"

He smiled in spite of himself. I went on:

"What worries me is not the unification of a nation around a motive-idea; but the aims of the Fascisms, that are false, mean, dangerous. Look at the Duces. They make their great peoples suffer, promising them wonders—which they know to be absolutely unobtainable by the means they favour. Fascisms simply cannot cure slumps, those modern plagues which, literally, kill more people daily through destitution than the plagues of old. That is the crux. Read these newspaper cuttings, they are very significant. I have taken them, on purpose, from the Press that is governed by Capital, and therefore necessarily Fascist. Here is *Paris-Soir* :

' . . . Does this mean that Italy is prosperous? It would be difficult to prove it. In 1929 there were 489,000 unemployed

¹ Note 1935. First war of diversion: Abyssinia.

Note 1936. Organisation of plots abroad. Italo-German support for Franco in 1936.

Note 1937. Permanent threats of war held over the world by Mussolini and Hitler, in the attempt to escape, by all possible means, from the failing internal economy of their unfortunate, deluded countries.

Japanese Fascism conquers China.

Notes 1938. On March 12th Hitler invades Austria. There's another one gone! In October Hitler invades Czechoslovakia.

in the country; to-day there are more than a million. . . . That is because Italy is living on another plane. It ignores the present. Using Hitler's expression, there is no longer any question, in Italy as in Germany, of salaries or profits. Italy is working for the future; she is living on hope. By working for the future, one can suppress the thorny questions of immediate distributive justice . . .'

"That's dumbfounding, but perfectly clear. It's a question of chloroforming the People. Of making it breathe-in 'the ideal' by every orifice. So that it may forget the present.

"Meanwhile the years will pass; that's always so much gained. The same manœuvre is being methodically prepared in this country. Can you put up with these cunning deceptions? We want to prepare the future, certainly, with all our might; but by a method which shall lead to a better state of things. Note further that Fascisms give themselves out to be Socialist, National-Socialist. These pseudo-Socialisms are nothing but the parasites of Capital, which they bleed white with more or less rapidity. And when the Capital it has exhausted succumbs, the parasite perishes with it. For Fascisms, under pressure of the unemployed masses, will be obliged progressively to ruin the wealthy, so as to permit the poor to 'live' by throwing them the bones of Capital—bone by bone—thus betraying those who financed them. This dissection of Capital will be accelerated as the progress of mechanism increases unemployment.

"In short, Fascisms must infallibly perish after having exhausted Capital.¹ Without, however, having constructed anything healthy or durable. Then Socialism will establish itself, but upon ruins. The peoples will be exhausted by suffering, disappointment and poverty, and the task of the social organisers will be extremely difficult.

¹ *Note 1937.* In Italy, as it is, the State pockets all profits on capital above 6 per cent. The German State swallows all profits above 4 per cent.

See Mussolini's speech on October 28th, 1937: "In Fascist Italy, Capital is at the orders of the State." Our Fascist scribblers don't see that Fascism is a false Socialism, infinitely more drastic than a Socialism which could afford to be relatively liberal.

"I know that some thoughtful 'moderates', especially in England, fancy it will be possible to maintain prosperity, to overcome slump after slump, even continuously to improve working-class conditions, without either Fascism or Socialism.¹ These conceited optimists are ready to believe that what has failed—and could not help failing—everywhere else, will succeed with them. You cannot argue with believers.

"However, thanks to the astuteness of journalists tamed according to the Goebbels, or some similar system, the Press makes fine promises, sufficiently vague for everyone to be able to project his own fairy castle upon this vaporous screen. Over this dream-screen pass grand decorative demonstrations; exciting speeches are heard, national choruses, magnificent acclamations: EIA! EIA!! ALALA!!! The film shows us forests of arms upraised in unison, *à la romaine*, military

¹ Notes 1937. 1. Great Britain only extricates herself from unemployment by an immense armaments programme, which "makes the rich pay". Then will come inflation. And then?

2. "Hitler has crushed the proletariat, starved the middle classes, reduced the Jews to beggary, made fresh martyrs among the Catholics, and ruined the small capitalists. . . . To-day he is attacking the larger ones, and even the great. The latest law relating to Companies suppresses all those whose capital is less than 1,200,000 francs, and forbids the formation of others unless they have six millions paid up. As for their shares, their face value must in no case be less than 12,000 francs. In France a law of this kind would suppress all shares without exception, almost the whole of the shareholders, and the majority of Limited Companies" (*L'Oeuvre*, October 1937).

3. "One must be blind not to see that all currencies are tending towards zero. Our franc, under Charlemagne, was of silver, and weighed a pound. After that it came tumbling down to the pre-war franc, which only weighed a few grammes, but lasted a century. Then came the Poincaré franc, which lasted eleven years; the Auriol franc, eleven months; the Bonnet franc . . . Hush! Enough said. It will be seen that the pace is accelerating. It is the same in every country organised on modern lines. This depreciation of all currencies without exception is caused by the growing needs of the Treasury, which comes to the rescue of tottering Liberal economy. Every Government promises not to devalorize, until the moment when circumstances constrain it to do so. Upon which it explains that the measure is beneficial, but promises not to do it again. Woe to the nations who see their currency collapse before they have accomplished the necessary structural reforms! They are like a man who, discovering that his leaky radiator has let all the water out, should console himself with the thought that he has only to fill it up again. Some people are incapable of understanding that it is childish to wait for the Past" (Duboin, *L'Oeuvre*, October 1937).

In 1937, in Germany, 16,000 shopkeepers had to shut up shop.

Salaries reckoned in 1929 on a basis of 100, dropped in March 1933 and October 1937 to 79.2, whereas the cost of living rose from 75.4 to 81.

In 1940 all Companies disposing of a capital below 100,000 m. will be dissolved.

The small business man has been reduced to working-class rank for the temporary benefit of the larger capitalist.

pageants of dazzling uniforms and plumed hats. EIA! EIA!! ALALA!!! We are living the story of the Napoleonic popular prints—tuppence coloured—all over again. I foresee a huge success for the party which, abandoning the shirt, adopts the *culotte à la française*, ‘so rejuvenating’ (you can buy artificial calves). What a spree! Arm in arm, the old Bonapartist, the senile Boulangist, and the kid Giovinezza. Fascism, as it is dreamed of, is a mirror that one mistakes for a window. One thinks one sees a vast prospect of ease, order, beauty, heroism, glory. One attempts to rush into this luminous, elastic, perfumed paradise—and bashes one’s nose on the glass.

“It is interesting to read this, written by one of our most notorious French would-be Fascists, Mr. de Kerillis, the Editor of *l’Echo de Paris*:

‘I have observed . . . the very distinct evolution of Fascism towards a progressive and moderate Communism, and that of Communism towards a Nationalism and a Social State closely allied to Fascism.

‘It would seem, in fact, as if all the régimes born of our post-war convulsions had common tendencies, and even a common basis. Watching their movements amid very dissimilar events and elements, one gathers the impression that they are heading more or less rapidly for the same goal, which is not yet possible to locate, or even to imagine exactly. Doubtless this goal will be the formula, the system, the régime upon which the modern scientific world will fix its choice and establish its new equilibrium.’

“Just a trap for Socialists, of course. But it shows that Socialism is not so dead as all that, since one of the most celebrated of France’s qualified Reactionaries can see, at bottom—as he says—no other way.

“Thus everybody considers the present system detestable. But it is the same with economic systems as with political régimes. When they are at their last gasp; when the time

has come for the 'Ministry of the bottom of the sack' (as Léon Daudet said amusingly of the Doumergue Ministry), many of those who yesterday wanted to smash everything up, get in a funk. They feel the familiar ground giving way beneath them, and their heart begins to throb for the 'good old régime' that they were about to bury. '*It had its good points.*' '*No experiments!*' say most of the newspapers to-day. Conservative-Revolutionaries. Like those strong-minded men who turn their old, worn-out mistress out of the house, and next day go, snivelling, to entreat her to return—as they did to M. Doumergue, for fear of something worse. The fear of something worse often leads to something much worse.

"Are you, a Conservative, afraid the Revolution may shatter, along with what *must* be destroyed, something that deserves to be kept? Revolutions are like surgical operations; easily undergone by a patient with a strong constitution, formidable in the case of an enfeebled body. Our poor country is very near to cachexy, and if the Revolution were to delay too long, nothing could be preserved. For then, instead of being cleansing and constructive, the Revolution would be destructive over a long period, through the violence of men who have suffered too much . . . and through the resistance of those who would have had time to organise themselves."¹

"Perhaps one might hit on some other thing than Socialism, all the same?"

"No other method is in sight. It is true that M. Doumergue has ideas of his own. I have just heard him, warily, preaching like Mr. Hitler or Mr. Mussolini over the wireless:

'Now children, get together nicely! War to the Socialists and Communists! Pay the tax-return you are about to receive, gaily and thankfully! It is for the maintenance of the noble franc! The franc is France! In defence of the franc! Vive le Franc! Vive la France! Just as we shouted

¹ Note 1937. The same people who brought about the 6th February, organised the vast plot against the Republic, discovered in November 1937.

at the Marne! We shall win through! And we shall be an object of admiration to the world!’¹

“So the motto of France is ‘The Franc’. She has known loftier ones.”

These poor old people of the Doumergue system are really living in the past. “Everything went so well then.” And so they honestly believe they know all about it. Except for a few enlightened individuals, the bourgeoisie knows no more than M. Doumergue of the underlying causes of what is happening. I’ve just been to see one of my old friends. He was, and still is, a man of the first importance in the Radical-Socialist Party—the party which for many years took upon itself the conduct of French policy, and without whose co-operation nothing can be done even now. My friend is a perfectly honest man. He lives by his pen, as a journalist. He took an active part in politics for forty years, was a Minister, and has remained poor. Does not even keep a servant (which is going too far).

Here is our conversation:

“My dear Ozenfant, everything is going to the dogs, that’s certain. France is heading for catastrophe if the French go on spending so insanely.”

“I should have thought,” said I, “that the slump, on the contrary, was caused by the French spending too little.”

“What do you mean? That’s absurd, my good man. . . .”

“Is this an absurdity? The moneyed classes aren’t spending enough, because they are parking their capital abroad,² or continuing to capitalise their incomes. The others, the poor, don’t earn enough to spend more than is absolutely necessary. (The few clerks and working women earning a little more than they need, try and save, so as to have a few pence to fall back on in their old age, for which there is no

¹ *Note October 1937.* The franc is now only worth two sous, and yet France is still on her feet. What do you say to that, M. Doumergue? But M. Doumergue has just died.

² *1939.* The franc is now worth about one sou.

² *Note 1937.* The enormous emigration of capital was one of the causes of the inflation of 1937.

Note 1938, and of January 1938.

protection.)¹ So that we are manufacturing in vast quantities for non-existent purchasers. At that game, capital is wasted without profit to anyone, and unemployment is increased."

"My pupil," said my friend, "I'll tell you a little story. Until last month my wife had an old gas cooker. It had done us perfectly well for the last thirty years. One day at the Bon Marché my wife saw a magnificent cooker, latest model, all in white enamel! She thought she'd like it, and asked my opinion. To please her, I bought it for her birthday. What is the result? The stove is bigger than the old one, so we buy bigger joints. These big joints are more than we two can get through, so we have to invite friends to help us. We spend money. Now you see, Ozenfant, why France is in jeopardy. Everybody's spending too much."

I hadn't the heart to reply. I was really scared. Here was a man, a historian of merit, perfectly aware of the relation between Sesostriis and Rameses II, an important figure in French politics, and yet without the slightest notion of the working of Economics. He was absurdly confusing private economy, which is looked upon as the cardinal virtue of the French, with general economics. There was a long silence. My friend continued:

"France has its heart on the left and its purse on the right, as was well said by my late friend Jules Siegfried. The French are prepared to die for their property. It is the foundation of all French politics. The French are uneasy because they are no longer sure of their savings or their incomes. They've got to be reassured. They will then loosen their purse-strings and undo their woollen stockings, and the slump will end with the recovery of the exchanges. And France and the French will be saved."

"Amen!" I replied. (Without pointing out his self-contradiction—by no means the only one.) "It's true that the Frenchman likes security. That is why he clings to his 'savings', which until lately gave it to him, and which after all

¹ *Note 1937.* At the instigation of the Communists, the Front Populaire Government is contemplating an old-age pension for workers.

are better than nothing. Even so, one must first be able to acquire these same precious savings, before laying them up. But what's the use of founding a policy on an impossibility? How can you ensure the stability of private savings and incomes? Since the whole system of general economics is rocking on its base, on account of a new, inescapable factor: mechanical production.

"The economic system is working so badly that people have no hope now except in the National Lottery. They try to get hold of, and will even pay a premium for, tickets which have done the journey to Cape tang, in Heralt, where certain winning numbers were bought. Our country, together with England the last bulwark of Capitalism to-day, no longer believes in anything but luck, with superstition thrown in."

I spoke to deaf ears. To this abstract politician, an adept at party combines, everything depends on the strategy of the lobby. Between this sort of politician and Reality there stands an armour-plated screen. And they have, these artist-politicians, a curious intellectual dislike for the 'Material'.¹

As the conversation was languishing rather dismally, dropping instinctively into the manner of an old Third Republic orator, he exclaimed in the fine, mellow tones of the conciliatory *méridional* that he is:

"You're a revolutionary, Ozenfant! One is, at your age! And though you may not think so, so am I, at mine. Let us both shout: '*Vive la Révolution!*'"

But for him that meant the Revolution of 1789.²

I took my leave, bewildered, and went off to call on an acquaintance, a prominent Socialist.

"My dear fellow," he said, "You take too gloomy a view. We are a powerful party. Nothing can be done without us. Blum³ sways the Chamber more than the public thinks. The

¹ Note 1937. Julien Benda notes in his memoirs, *Un regulier dans le siècle* (*Nouvelle Revue Française*, August 1937), "the *contempt*" of his intellectual contemporaries for Economics . . . "those among us who turn Marxist . . . do so for moral, far more than for economic reasons."

² Note 1937. On re-reading this I feel that what I have related sounds like an exaggeration. I must beg the reader to take my word for it; it is literally true.

³ At that time official leader of the Socialist Party, and a Deputy.

Confédération Générale du Travail, and its Head, Jouhaux, march hand in hand with us. We have only to speak sharply, and everyone obeys. You saw what happened on the 9th February. We, and our Socialist Party, are the Shepherds of the People. Without disturbances, without smashing anything, we shall lead the People to power."

"That," I replied, "is exactly what the German Social-Democrats said. They were certainly more numerous and infinitely better organised than the Socialists of France, but they didn't last long under Hitler. And what do you say to all the recent shootings in Vienna, in which the Social-Democrats were massacred? You seem to think, as these vanquished people did, that one can parley with the feudal wolves and get them to despoil themselves in favour of the People."¹

"You talk like a Communist," said the Socialist rather curtly.

I felt that this Shepherd needed only a crook with a tri-colour posy to complete him; and that one passed for a Bolshevik pretty cheaply nowadays.

Leaving the office of the Pink Socialist, hardly more reassured than after calling on my Radical, I looked in at the lodgings of G. . . , a metal-worker, and a Communist, clear-minded, practical. But he was at the factory.

Mr. But was waiting for me at home. I gave him an account of my visits. He too was prepared for Socialism, if it had to come. But of an "evolutionary" kind. Then I told him what I might have told my Socialist-Shepherd, or rather sheep:

"Whatever your preferences may be, you must admit that Marx and Engels were true prophets. Read their brief and ancient 'Manifesto' of 1847. They foresaw exactly what is happening, and distressing the world to-day. Their contemporary, Renan, also conceived the establishment in

¹ *Note July 1937.* It is obvious that the Heads of the Spanish Republic have committed the same noble and tragic mistake. That makes three: Germany, Austria, Spain—without counting the lesser failures.

Take care! Take great care, Socialists of every country! You are far less powerful than you think. The tragic proofs are here!

Europe, after 1871, of a '*series of unstable Dictatorships, a Caesarism of the decadent period*'.

"We see these Dictatorships realised or in process of formation. This same Renan, so clear-sighted, fancied (with a certain horror, for he believed in the fundamental necessity of integral private property) that a day would come when the State would interfere '*in contracts, in industrial and commercial relations, in questions of property*'. Well, M. Renan, the French State has already placed an enormous amount of capital in a number of industrial concerns: Navigation Companies, Aviation Companies, Motor-works, Banks, etc.¹ But here is the absurdity. These Companies, when they fail, are treated as though they were public institutions, at the expense of the taxpayers, who are made to pay the deficit. And if industry and commerce prosper when thus re-floated and maintained by the nation, then the profits go to Capital.

"So gross a caricature gives the enemies of Socialism a chance to claim a trumped-up victory. This upside-down Socialism can only produce absurd results, since it maintains and even strengthens the privileges of Capital, insuring it against all risks by socialising losses. Moreover State control, thus inverted, preserves all the internal incompatibilities of Capitalism. Nothing can be done to prevent these internal contradictions bringing it sooner or later to an end. Industrial production must inevitably cause slumps which, even though they may be for a while held in check, will eventually prove fatal.

"The safety-valve invented in the infancy of the machine

¹ Note 1937. In England, under Neville Chamberlain's Conservative Ministry, there is talk of nationalising the mines.

What did M. Paul Faure, one of the Heads of the French Socialist Party, say at Calais on October 31st, 1937? Terrible things? He said:

"We Socialists consider, after fifteen months of governmental experience, that the great nationalisations, especially those of Public Credit, Insurance Companies, and White Coal, will be indispensable to the real recovery of the finances and economy of the nation.

"Political Democracy, in our view, can have no lasting or historic significance unless it is extended to, and completed by, economic and social Democracy."

Is this so far removed from the schemes of the English Conservatives? In other words, is it enough?

age was mass-exporting and intensive colonisation. But most countries are now already producing 'too much'. The colonies will produce more and more for themselves, and will cease to buy the products and manufactured articles of the Mother Countries.¹

"All this will necessitate before long, willy-nilly, the establishment of a system based no longer on the free manufacture and sale of products or articles, but on their controlled manufacture, and their distribution, directly or indirectly, in exchange for the necessary labour. And that is the first principle of all true Socialism."

"We have only to limit production! And above all, to lower wages!"

"Then the masses will hardly be able to buy anything—which will mean still more under-consumption, with increased unemployment, etc. . . . That's what's happening in Italy at the moment, where unemployment has grown since the workers' wages were lowered."²

"Let us therefore plump deliberately for a realism which will take into account these facts, and turn them to the service of progress. So that we may no longer hear what I have just heard over the wireless: our Minister of Agriculture deploring '*the gravity of the danger threatening France this autumn. This year is exceptionally favourable for cereal crops, and it is to be feared there will be an excess of thirty million quintals of wheat*'. The Minister of Agriculture in the U.S.A. says: 'If the United States are to recover their former prosperity, twenty million hectares under cultivation must be allowed to become waste land.'³

"You'll see that one of these days the State, which has

¹ Note 1937. See the case of the English Dominions. Also the case of Japan "conquering" China, in order to sell there the products of her industry, and closing it to the United States, Germany, England, etc.

² Note 1937. This year they have had to be "increased". Hence an accentuation of the slump. Hence the war with Spain, by way of diversion, and in the hope of fresh markets.

³ Note 1934. In *Regards sur la Terre Promise* (Flory, Paris), in which he shows afresh the width and generosity of his views, Elie Faure gives these figures taken from *London-Paris Agency*: In the United States, in 1933, 6,200,000 hogs, 220,000 sows and 600,000 cows were destroyed; several thousand sheep were left to the vultures. . . .

been distributing insect-killers free to the farmers, will be distributing special manures to sterilise the soil.¹

"An article by M. H. Tracol informs us that:

'The Syndicate of Flax-spinners, in agreement with a Bank in Lille, have just compelled MM. Boutemy, owners of an important spinning-mill at Lys-les-Lannoy, to sign an agreement by the terms of which an indemnity of 3,600,000 francs is to be paid them in compensation for the destruction of their entire factory plant. Further, the signatories undertook not to replace this plant during the next fifty years. . . . On the 24th March, in reply to a letter of protest addressed by M. Lebas, Mayor and Deputy of Roubaix, to the President of the Council, the Flax-growers' Syndicate published a notice, as follows:

"It is not from sheer wantonness that these manufacturers have submitted to the painful necessity of smashing up plant (which had cost twenty-eight million francs) and destroying a factory that was formerly a source of wealth. They have yielded reluctantly to unavoidable circumstances. *Were there any hope of better times, the works might have been closed rather than destroyed. All hope of this nature appears to be vain.* A portion of the flax industry must disappear, if the remainder is to be saved."

¹ Note December 1934. Here we are! The soil is to be sterilised. Flandin, President of the Council, avowed partisan of "Liberal Economy", has given orders to all wine-growers owning vineyards of more than ten hectares, to pull up their vines according to a specified ratio. It will be forbidden to sow wheat without permission, and so on. . . .

Note 1937. "Domitian earned a reputation as an improver of the soil by ordering the vines to be dug up in the Narbonnaise, one of the great provinces of Roman Gaul. He did so to stabilise the price of wine in answer to the Roman vine-growers' complaints of over-production.

"A few years later another Roman emperor, Probus, gave the opposite order. The vines were replanted in the Narbonnaise, which has led to our having Monsieur Barthe as Deputy for the department.

"The Minister of Agriculture Cathala, acting on the advice of Monsieur Barthe, has ordered the vines to be dug up again. The vine-growers of the Narbonnaise are complaining of over-production.

"In reality, the Roman vine-growers wished to safeguard their profits, that is to say their purchasing power. This is the Narbonnaise vine-growers' sole preoccupation" (Duboin).

Note 1938. At the beginning of this year there are thirteen million unemployed in the United States.

"What remainder? The remainder of the power of Capital in France, henceforth powerless, and thereby spreading starvation.

"This quotation is worthy of lengthy consideration. It is so striking that I feel bound to enlarge upon it.

"Yes, the Machine is stronger than the boldest captains of industry. It is a law unto itself; it governs, and will govern, more and more. Observe too that the labouring class, which in 1825, in the same Lille factory, attempted to destroy the first machines, is to-day defending the machine system and thus becoming the champion of progress. For at the rate they are going, the manufacturers will quickly lead us back to the stone axe and the distaff.

"The Machine is an admirable means of progress. But machines must be made to work for the benefit of everybody. For, mark this, Gentlemen of Roubaix, there is not, for the moment, too much flax. Nor too much bread. But there are too many poor people unable to buy them. There are now too many hands. I know you can't 'let prices fall', because you would be ruined, and your factories would close down. But as you have said yourselves, henceforth you are powerless. Very well, then. Hand the job on to another régime which will make itself responsible for progress.¹

"It is no longer Capital that must be saved, but humanity. Otherwise all is lost, and civilisation will perish in the most appalling bloodshed, in all the horrors of civil² and foreign

¹ Note 1938. Winston Churchill, who can hardly be called a Red, wrote the other day:

"Science is here, offering for the first time, to the whole mass of the inhabitants of Europe an easier life, a finer reward for their pains, more abundant food, a more varied diet, more leisure, more security, more joy. Everything is there, within our grasp. It was never more certain that plenty might render wealth more abundant!"

Pierre : In short, Winston Churchill is what we agreed to call a horrible demagogue?

Paul : Or a man who looks ahead, instead of taking his inspiration from the Councillors of Louis XV.

Pierre : So there is nothing left to us but Fascism?

Paul : What? Are you foolish enough to imagine you have only to put a Dictator at the head of a country, for it to be spared structural reforms, if the economic organisation renders them inevitable? Go and take a little trip round Germany and Italy, and we'll discuss the matter further.

² Note 1936. In Spain the Italo-German Fascists are carefully SHOOTING DOWN the Socialists.

wars. For there are people who, to reduce unemployment and make profits out of war munitions, desire war. They forget that after the war the numbers of consumers will be down by millions, while the means of production will be enormously increased, thanks to the machines built to manufacture armaments and munitions, and ensure the food-supply of troops and civilians.

"Capitalism, an extremely ingenious system, has been a very fruitful one. It made possible the admirable 19th century, and favoured individualism, from which remarkable inventions and achievements were born. It created machinery, which freed humanity by giving it at last the leisure required to develop civilisation to a high degree (I shall return to this). But a system has, for its own time, only the value of the results it gives. Capitalism should be hung up in the Museum of Ancient Models, beside the Ptolemaic System and the clocks which Haroun al Raschid sent to that modernist Charlemagne.

"It must be understood that mechanical production, immense as it is, can become as much greater as is desired. There exist even now, in these early beginnings of the Machine Age (it is barely a hundred years old) machines in Japan so productive that a single little girl can control a huge loom. *L'Illustration* has just set up a stitching-machine at Bobigny which takes the place of three hundred workers. . . .

' . . . no doubt a day will come,
When the hand of a little child will guide
What once a multitude of metal-workers guided.
No doubt a day will come.',

says 'Aragon' in *Hurrah l'Oural*."

"Then nobody will do another hand's turn? That'll be a pretty state of things!"

"Then socialised mankind will have the choice of two ways. (a) It will make use of machinery, insanely, to go on increasing 'comfort'. Which would be possible thanks to increasing technical improvements. But we know how superabundance of

wealth and possessions can enslave the rich. There is no object in encouraging the spread of their neurotic extravagance.

(b) Or else mankind will use machinery wisely, to free itself as much as possible from material labour. Production will be limited to a definite amount—a fairly high one. It will be the duty of the leaders to teach, or to impose, the elementary truth that *a man has only one body*. With a more extensive use of the machine, hours of work may be reduced in proportion, once a sufficiency of production is attained. This happy moment is approaching slowly in Russia, where industrial equipment, before the Revolution, was wanting, and is, in spite of immense efforts, still inadequate. It will come much sooner in Germany, England, the United States and France, whose industries are already powerfully provided with those **SLAVES OF THE FUTURE, the MACHINES.**

“With Machinery at the service of all, civilisation could at last grow and spread over the world. There would be no more need of colonies or of wars, to absorb or destroy surplus population. We should have a humanity freed from stupid daily worries, from the appalling risks of poverty, from the necessary and stultifying cares of petty saving, and the demoralising preoccupations of State economy. This humanity, provided with security for the morrow, for its old age, with time for thought and recreation, will be able to enjoy the benefits, the ease and leisure that, in the great periods of history, the slave system gave to a privileged few.

“Leisure has always been necessary for thought. In Athens there lived 40,000 masters and 400,000 slaves. Among that mass, how many might not have been worth as much as, or more than, their masters, if they too had had slaves to leave them leisure to cultivate their minds? In the Middle Ages thought was to a great extent monopolised by the land-owner monks. In the 19th century Capital with its machines recreated the ancient system, camouflaged by the few concessions that the new Feudal Lords made to the working classes. In our ‘democratic’ world almost everybody is the slave of work. Will you not help to bring about the time when the machine

will be the slave? Then, Duhamel, we shall have leisure to listen to our hearts and to our heads! To-day one can hardly listen to anything but one's anxiety and one's belly. And one could talk of art again, and make it.

"When will all those who talk so fiercely of defending the 'Mind' against 'Matter' understand that the 'Mind' will not be free to play freely till the management of 'Matter' has at last been properly organised?"

Mr. But: "Very pretty! Quite Utopian! But what, in this paradise of idleness will the fools and the second-rate find to do?"

"When the People, who were working twelve hours, asked for a ten-hour day, the answer was:

"Impossible! What would *they* do with their leisure? They'd go and drink. Let us save them from this danger by keeping them in the factory!"¹

"We now have an eight-hour day in France. Haven't they made the best of this advantage? The young hardly drink at all nowadays. It is impossible not to admit that the level of the people has risen in proportion to its leisure, in spite of the secret desire to keep it in intellectual tutelage. Let those of my age have the moral honesty to compare the workman of to-day with the poor creatures of our youth, stupefied by incessant toil. In my childhood the bricklayers worked in the summer from five in the morning till dusk, and sometimes by lamplight: fifteen to sixteen hours."

Mr. But: "A good dose of physical labour is an excellent form of sport, a source of skill and strength, which will never come amiss to the body or the mind."

¹ *Note 1936.* The same was said of the forty-hour week and the paid holidays which have just been voted. The Feudalists are conducting a furious campaign against this progressive law. There are people who yawn away their whole year, and yet cannot, in good faith, understand that those who work all the year round should need a little rest.

Note 1938. Adrienne Monnier, the learned librarian and founder of an excellent lending library—therefore well-fitted to judge—writes in her *Gazette des Amis des Livres*:

"When people talk of the public's increasing lack of interest in books, they do not remember sufficiently, it seems to me, how little leisure most of the superior workers in our state of society possess. . . ."

"Certainly, but don't try and make me say, Mr. But, as I see you screwing up your lips to do, that I want a society composed entirely of intellectuals and philosophising philosophers! A paradise of idleness! What I am hoping for is a society cultivated from childhood, and for as long as may be necessary. A society in which, as soon as his share of social work is accomplished, the educated man can give himself freely to whatever work he chooses. There are certainly a majority of men in the world who, because they have to do a particular job in order to live, are unable to do the job Nature fitted them for. So much the worse for them and for society at large!

"Such a revolution in the methods of work will not be achieved in a day, even after the revolution which undertakes it.¹ So there will be plenty of time to prepare the children for the new social régime.

"A silly boob said to me yesterday:

"'Have a game of Bridge? It would help to pass the time away. . . . What! You don't play Bridge? . . . Let's try Poker. . . . What! You don't play Poker? . . . Nap, then? You don't play cards at all? How fantastic!'

"Poor wretch! How many of us, who have chosen callings that are to our taste, would like days of forty-eight hours! You ask what would be done with the people who were bored? These are the real wastrels. (For if it is natural to be lazy about things one doesn't like, it is unpardonable to be interested in nothing.) I should put them to the hardest work of all. There will be enough of it for a long while."

"They would do it badly, or do harm."

"Are you going to build the social plan to the measure of the worst? I believe that a society freed from the need of possessing—at present a vital need—would be more moral, and if not absolutely good, at least less wicked."

"Personally, I don't care a hang! Let the others get on as best they may. What I want is to go on living, living well! After all, I have the right to live well, haven't I?"

¹ *Note 1937-1938.* Léon Blum has undertaken this reform; but the Reactionary Party is doing everything to wreck it.

"It's everybody's wish, Sergius, to live well. But a decent man who wants to live well, wants first and foremost to lead a decent life. And can you live happily in a world where mediocrity is subsidised, and suffering is the constitutional rule?"

"In fact, if we agree to the principle 'Civilisation', which, I repeat, is the only possible line to follow, an immense progress would be accomplished as soon as leisure (and not unemployment) had been distributed. Those capable of thought could educate themselves, or accomplish their task, free from material anxieties. Then we should have true LIBERTY.

"It cannot be too often pointed out that the proletariat would not be alone in profiting by this new organisation, but that all—manual workers and intellectuals, clean hands and horny hands, the young, the old, the invalids, men and women, everybody, with the exception of the inveterate feudalists or the parasitic profiteers—would find happiness in it. That everyone would have the satisfaction of working, no longer for a privileged few, but for the community, and therefore indirectly for themselves.¹ And that above all the fear of the morrow, of old age or illness, would disappear, allowing at last the beauty of the Present to come to life:

*'Yes, we live, we live to-day,
But it is a life
Of to-morrow.'* (Jarov. Soviet poet.)

"I do not know when a healthy economic régime will be put into force here, nor what it will be called. But I am

¹ Note 1937. "The law which introduced the forty-hour week into France increases the workers' leisure to such an extent that it would be more accurate to say it has created it. The extension to the mass of the workers of this privilege, which hitherto had been the privilege—and one of the most valuable—of a minority, is a fine victory. . . . Yet some people are not very hopeful about it. They are wondering whether the workers will be suited to the new joys; whether they will not waste their leisure. They even wonder if, however just a more equal distribution of leisure among men may be, a premature decline rather than a progress may not be the result. To these doubts one may first of all reply that no culture, no civilisation, has been able to arise and develop except by the existence of leisure, permitting of disinterested activity; That all refinement even, all elegance, courtesy, taste, are the fruits of leisure far more than of wealth" (Francis Perrin).

certain that it will come, some day, and that it will be of a Socialistic trend.

"I wish to say here, once for all, that I shall restrict myself to the general lines of Socialism, real Socialism; its bones and its muscles. I shall not follow up the nuances of the different schools, from S.F.I.O. Socialists to Communists, though most people cling, out of casuistry, to these distinctions. I wish to say too, that the general framework will, at any rate at first, have their contents differentiated by the social or local conditions of the actual environment in which they are established. It is even possible, having regard to the present differences between peoples, that, as in the case of early Christianity (with which Socialism has certain points in common) and for the same reasons, there may arise a Socialist School of the East and of the West.

"It will probably be the same too with Socialism as with Darwinism. Time will correct its imperfections. But the advance will be made along Socialist lines, as biology progresses along Darwinian lines, in spite of early errors.

"This being said, I believe in Socialism as the only method offering means of solving problems, which must not be trifled with if we wish civilisation to continue. And that must be done at all costs."

"Even at the cost of a violent revolution?"

"If necessary. That is the opinion of the Communists. *They* don't believe in shepherds' crooks.

"A word about the Communist Party in France. They are realists, provided with an ideal. It is very instructive, at one of those meetings where the different parties of the Left are represented, to hear a Radical-Socialist, a Socialist, a Communist, speaking one after the other. The Radical goes in for 'common sense' and eloquence; the Socialist is hardly less flowery; the Communist's speech is terse. No big phrases. He promises no paradise. The prospects he opens on the future do not show, like the Fascist mirage, our own persons in close-up. They show an orderly plan, lines of men converging, and oneself among them, collaborating. The doctrine

is clear and simple. So simple and so clear that its nakedness is an easy target for criticism. But if ideas are to be realised, it is dangerous to carry them beyond a certain limit, for then they cease to be practicable. The aspiration to purity may be productive, but absolute purity is always unrealisable; and henceforth the solutions of social questions will need to be put in practice at once.

“Shallow-minded people are annoyed and bored by the dialectic methods of the Marxists. They do not understand their value as an exercise for the mind.

‘They are sophists as much as philosophers; they exercise their mind for the sake of exercising it. A subtle distinction, a long, delicate analysis, a captious argument, difficult to follow, attracts and captivates them. They do not love truth for itself, absolutely, forgetting and despising all else. Truth is a prey they often capture in their chase. But one has only to hear them argue, to realise that, though they do not confess it, they are fonder of the chase than of the prey: the chase with its cunning, its ruses, its windings, its speed, and the sense of free, wandering, victorious action with which it fires the nerves and the imagination of the hunter.’

“That was said by Taine of the Greeks. To my mind, the passion for dialectics has produced some pretty good results since the days of the Sophists, the Kabbalists and the Casuists. It has provided the essential basis of our science and civilisation, and has given suppleness to the critical sense.

“The chief interest of the Communist Party lies in the extreme importance it gives, without false shame, to the power of the ‘Material’.

“Without, however, falling into the absurdity of denying the essential value of the mind, and, of course, of the feelings.

“The Communist Party in France is anyhow beginning to realise that Paris is not Moscow, and therefore that although the fundamental principles must remain rigorously fixed, the régime will have to be modified to suit the various national

groups. This the Soviets themselves are trying to do for their three hundred confederated peoples. Cachin, Vaillant-Couturier, Thorez¹ all talk of 'Soviets à la française'.

"The Heads of the Kremlin turn to the old Europe for anything they can make use of, in material or intellectual matters. They do so quite openly. We should also look towards Moscow, for we have much to learn from it. But let us not make the mistake, any more than the Russians do, of considering everything done in Russia as perfect. One can always hope that, whatever happens there, the definition of progress will remain: a Trend towards Better Things. This is the aim of Socialism. Can true progress ever run counter to a healthy doctrine?

"Moreover it goes without saying that once the revolution is accomplished, evolution begins. Little by little, abuses creep in, and pave the way for another revolution.²

"Too many Socialist speakers at one time affected a phobia of 'the individual'; giving us a misleading close-up of the individual and society in opposition. This idea is most uncongenial to the French, who, though convinced that there is no room for the anarchist in a well-organised society, are equally convinced that the value of any social order consists in the sum of its individual values working together for the same end. I have no patience with that handful of extremists who talk in abstract terms of the future social order, as though it were a sort of dough, made of anonymous grains of dust stuck together by some doctrinal, disciplinary or military agglutinant (which would be equally hateful, whether it called itself Right or Left), instead of showing that in a healthy and highly coherent body, each individual cell, far from

¹ *Note 1936.* "The French Republic of the Soviets will take into account the national peculiarities of our country in every domain: economic, social, cultural . . . she will take into account, she cannot help taking into account, the inherent characteristics of our people in France" (Thorez, Secretary-general of the Communist Party in France, 4th September, 1936).

² *Note 1937.* The tragic executions in Moscow, in 1936, 1937, would appear to confirm this suggestion. All the above, you must remember, belongs to 1934. What I am praising here is the Socialist idea, the Socialist system. It is not for me to criticise the violent means employed to build it up in U.S.S.R., where conditions are what they are, and not what they would be in any of our countries.

being a slave, benefits necessarily by the combined labour of all the others.

"As for the violent language which for a long while was so prejudicial to the Left, it always does more harm than good. Let us leave it to the Right: to Mussolini, Hitler and Daudet.

"Listen to this:

'Political exaggerations are entertaining, and serve more or less to bolster up, day by day, the convictions of the simple reader. But the chief concern of a great Party should be the stressing of essential ideas. For, after all, it is from these principles, from its doctrine, rather than from polemical violence and cunning, that Socialism draws its proselytising power. It is better to work with the grain than against it, and, keeping to the solid ground of necessity, show Collectivist Evolution to be inevitable, and how it is in our minds already half accomplished.' (Programme de Nancy, 1897.)

"A curious passage, written by Maurice Barrès in his good period. (He ended badly as a Jingo.) In his youth he declared: '*The dead are poisonous.*' In his old age he poisoned us with them! And furnished Mr. Hitler with no end of arguments, with his doctrine of absolute Nationalism. Compare Barrès's words with those of M. Kerillis, quoted above.

"Another danger in stuffing the masses with the same sort of stereotyped guff that is ladled out by ranting candidates of every party in the throes of an election, is that the adherents obtained by these theatrical means are very unreliable. One film is soon forgotten when the next comes on. Troops may be easily recruited in this fashion, but they are undependable, and therefore dangerous, since they would probably follow no matter what agitator, be he Anarchist or Fascist, who talked louder, better, or last.¹

¹ Note 1936. The French electoral campaign of 1936, so dignified, so "realist", and so successful for the Left, avoided the dangers pointed out above. These elections returned 72 Communist Deputies to the Chamber, and 195 Socialists, that is to say 267 of Socialist tendencies.

"I love my country. I love it for the sole reason that it has greatly contributed to the capital of Civilisation. And because I love it, I long to see it drop its short-sighted policy—the policy of the old *rentière* afraid of losing her pennies.

"Under the pressure of Reality, a secret but profound transformation is going on these days in people's minds. One is suddenly surprised to find Jones and Robinson quite changed. They have realised certain things, and have adopted a new set of opinions. And change them as often as they change their socks. Jones-Robinson thought he had found The Ideal; but now he has an inkling that he will not get any immediate benefit from this party, so off he goes to the one next door, or across the way.

"Observe that all the parties of the Right call themselves Revolutionary and Anti-capitalist.

"Every day a new party of the Right is formed. . . . styling itself of the Left. The parties nearest each other squabble among themselves like the sects in Jerusalem, and, like them, about the merest trifles.

"Everybody is prepared to be a Mussolini—a Goering even—but not to remain obscure. Many Leaders would like to become the Dictators of theories they give out as being of their own invention. For Socialist tendencies are no longer considered 'up to date'. But above all, most Frenchmen harbour in their inmost self the remains of an old, unreasoning horror of the words Socialism and Communism. Very few, as a matter of fact, know what they mean. The present terror of Communism, however, makes the word Socialism a little less frightening.¹

"Do you recognise this?

'A spectre is haunting the whole of Europe, the spectre of Communism. All the Powers of the old Europe are united in a Holy Alliance, to hunt down this spectre. . . . The Radicals of France, and the policemen of Germany. . . .'

¹ In 1936 the French had a Socialist at the head of the Government. They shook in their shoes. And after a time they got used to it.

"It is the opening sentence of the Communist Party's Manifesto, of 1849, by Marx and Engels. The spectre is very much alive!"¹

"Many intelligent people are agreed as to the possibilities of these economic systems, but a *feeling* of repugnance keeps them off. Paul Bonifas considers very rightly that 'feeling often lags behind intelligence'. Feelings are sometimes no more than old, in-grown habits. And as J. M. Hanson says, '*Some habits are as difficult to get rid of as an old razor-blade.*'"

"Why all this fuss, after all? It should be possible to decide on the new economic organisation as calmly as at a Board Meeting of some big Company. Too much to hope for, perhaps."

Just home from a journey. My first errand was to a printing works, where I had something to see to. The concierge came to ask help to get a semi-paralysed old man, forsaken by everybody, back into his bed. There was a brass plate on the door: *Artist-Engraver*. He was past speaking. When we had lifted him up, I saw hatred in his eyes. It was intended, I felt, for a social system that fleeces the poor and the weak, abandons the sick and the aged to their fate, and is of necessity barbarous, since it is entirely based on the exploitation by class of the primary needs of the others. The old engraver, it appears, was a Communard of 1870. May the expression of that dying man be my torch, in the days when egoism threatens to get the better of my will. Let me contribute with all the strength that is in me to the advent of a world less fatally harsh. It will be a sentimental reason in addition to the others. Presently I will say what I think on the subject of sentiment. And that for intellectual reasons, which I shall attempt to make clear.

¹ *Note 1934*. The spectre gave Japan a pretext for invading Manchuria in 1931. 1936. Italy and Germany make war on "Bolshevist" Spain. Many people in France and England look favourably on these atrocities, thinking of their purses.

Note 1937. "Anti-Communist" war of Japan against China.

End of 1937. Anti-Communist, Anti-Comintern pacts, to which Italy, Japan and others adhere, round about Germany. Of course it is merely a mask for their banditry. And thus they curry favour with the City (in London).

Note 1938. Etc. . . .

SECOND FLOOR

SELF-EXAMINATION

June 1934. *"Poets are like birds. Every noise sets them singing"*
(Chateaubriand).

Believe me, it is not easy for us to sing to-day. As artists, our tasks were arduous enough before. Less fortunate than the technicians—I don't say the inventors—the older we get, the more difficult our art becomes. At the outset it all seems quite easy.

"Another year or two," thinks the beginner, "and I shall know as much as the Master. And *I* am still a young man."

Let us not blast their illusions. If they knew what they were in for, would the best of them dare so much as to start on their career? The difficulties of art increase in cubic ratio to our progress. An artist's progress is measured by the greatness of his new difficulties. He struggles towards a higher and yet higher level. The ascent soon becomes so difficult that it is possible only to a very few in one century. Art is our Paradise and our Calvary. So it has been, and always will be.

There is also, and nearly always has been, the difficulty of living. I mean the money difficulty. We have so little time, and so little inclination, to think of money. And it hardly comes to any but those who sacrifice to it. How many great artists have grown rich without surrendering something? Many of the best modern artists were rich from birth: Manet, Degas, Lautrec, Cézanne. And Seurat was comfortably off. To-day less and less money finds its way to the studios.

But this is not the worst of it. Up to now the artist had an empty belly but a free mind. To-day, social questions occupy and preoccupy him at every moment. It is becoming an obsession. I have related my experience during the slump of 1932.

Some people say to us:

"Think of your work, nothing but your work. Do your job. That is your way of serving humanity."

That is true. I believe the most uncompromising revolutionary, even if he is a chiropodist, should go on with his work. It is by doing our jobs that we fulfil our social duty. But it isn't as easy as it looks. For distressing social questions force their way into the Intellectual's study and the studio of the most egotistic. Should we, can we even, attempt to stand aloof? Let us consider the facts as they are to-day.

The artist, as a man, must inevitably share the common fate. Yet some, disgusted by the social impotence and ugliness of present-day conditions, shut themselves up. They think they can serve their art by isolating themselves. We see them suffocating, morally speaking, in the horrible glass bell of the airpump. Their work is obviously useless, out of touch with everything. (I should even say out of fashion, if the idea of fashion, which I intend to discuss by-and-by, did not necessitate a long analysis. A really great work is never out of fashion.) It is really impossible to conceive and carry out a "useful" work of art, if one is cut off from the flow, the pressure of the social force. The IVORY TOWER is a tomb, in which the Dead paint and write. The works of these recluses grow like hair and the nails of corpses.

"I don't care a damn for politics!"

That used to sound independent, smart, intellectual, above footling realities. But try it to-day! I feel sure there are Benedictines who turn on their wireless sets surreptitiously for the "News".

All the same I often wonder whether such lengthy tasks as mine are compatible with life as it is made for us to-day. Will not art soon be reserved for the last of the rich? It is easier to-day to forget oneself than to forget what is happening, or ought to be happening. You must understand this: artists, poets, musicians, scientists, men who spend their lives in the search for just proportions, no doubt feel injustice more acutely than others. For other people spend their lives mainly

in assuring their own comfort—less easily acquired to-day through justice than by a certain submission to injustice. They are therefore, in so far as they benefit by it, inured to injustice. The social, practical side of things has always interested me. In Russia, in my youth, I mixed with the men who a few years later were to bring about the great Revolution. I took a keen interest in these problems. But on the abstract plane of philosophy or psychology. At that time it was *their* revolution that was in question. Now it is ours. It is there before us. Doubtless inevitable. Sometimes of an evening, when the sky over Paris is reddened by the lights of the city, one dreams of the first flames, and the shadows of the smoke from the fires of the Great Night. . . .

And so, for us in the world of to-day—if I may judge by myself—everything that reaches us through our senses, everything we see, hear or feel, everything to which we cling, or against which we protest, everything affects us. All the ideas, sights, images, events that go through our brain, which we drive out of it or store up in it, absolutely everything is linked up with us, as we are with our work. Thus the work is influenced by the social conditions. The art product of these feverish times is the sum of our reactions to our individual, social, universal life, to the whole of our life. The flight of a fly, a severe strike, Brother Hitler and Mr. Mussolini, all collaborate with us in our toil.

Fifteen months have gone by since I rejected the first version of my picture. Obscurely, circumstances had worked on me, and I was suddenly aware of a break. My painting, as I had conceived it in 1931, was no longer in harmony with myself. Time had changed me. The failure of my picture was a cruel blow; I have already described its effects on my thoughts. The more and more troubled state of my country, the tragedy of the 6th February, the necessity in which we found ourselves in France, of taking sides definitely for progress or for reaction, all led me to take stock of myself intellectually.

Immediate realities harry us without leaving us much time

to write or even to think. I took advantage of a mild illness that confined me to my room, to think things over at some length, and noted down my conclusions:

France is henceforth cut savagely in two: Right, Left. No matter what reservations each of us may make, we must go to the Right or to the Left. In this strange Paris of 1934, a Paris that used to be the Capital of *la nuance*, the fine shades no longer count. Black and white—or rather, red and white. If one is not to be false to one's deepest feelings and reasons for living, one must join that half of the crowd which at least does not consider them a crime. The Pinks must join the Reds.

In 1932 I felt and thought it my duty to side openly with the Left. But a sense of the People's suffering had a good deal to do with my decision. To-day Reason has an equal share. My reasons are these:

Under God or the King; under Democracy, Dictatorship, the Soviet; in War or Peace; starving, or stuffing at the Palace Hotel; in foot, in a Rolls, then and now, the sum of the angles of a triangle equals 180 degrees. The "abstract" researchers may therefore, if they choose, ignore all that is going on around them, since they are merely setting in motion a permanent machine, theoretically perfect. They are thinking in terms of the Eternal. Like the mathematicians investigating the machinery of mathematics, or making it function in the void. This is art for art's sake. (Art for art's sake is only possible in pure science anyway. We shall see why in a moment.) But as soon as this chaste and pure mind introduces into his reasoning—or imagining—machine the smallest practical datum, he begins to act in terms of the Temporal, and leaves the Eternal behind. However "academic" the seeker calculating the curve of light, the order of a planet, the path of a comet; so soon as he sets himself to figure out a cannon or a perfume, he becomes an engineer, and it's all up with Simon Pure.

You see how easy it is to pass from one camp to the other without meaning to. It was the fate of that great German

chemist, Fritz Haber, who has just died. By his syntheses of ammoniacal products he blasted the hopes founded on the Allies' Blockade.¹ The War could go on, cutting short millions of lives, including those of not a few "clerks".²

The artist is on the side of Haber. While satisfying through his work his own actual need, he works for the world of to-day. If he thinks of the world of the future, '*sub specie æternitatis*', he is acting temporally none the less, if only because the world of the future will be temporal too.

There can be no society without politics. Politics incite to passion from a need to demonstrate this fact. There is, even, more passion than people appear to think at the basis of Economics, that supposedly frigid science. See how passionate people become when they discuss commerce, capital, inflation, deflation, banking scandals, free trade, controlled economy, socialism, Marxism. This is only natural, since it is on our natural (or acquired) desire to possess, that all economic systems, however diverse, are founded, whether they set out to satisfy or to destroy the passion. Artists act always under the stimulus of actual passions. To yield to them or to resist them, makes no difference. For in either case the Actual is the moving force—acceptance and refusal are alike consequences. Cézanne, Gauguin, Rimbaud left Paris, which they loathed, for Tahiti, Aix en Provence and the Harrar. But they were merely changing their surroundings, that is to say

¹ *Note 1933. L'Intransigent.* "In April 1915, when asphyxiating gas was first released by the enemy, the wind drove the cloud back over the German trenches, causing a hecatomb. There were several thousand victims."

Mme Haber committed suicide in a fit of despair. Her body lies buried in the cemetery of Dahlem, near the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. (Where Haber was doing his work on the gases.) Mme Haber was the wife of the professor who invented and perfected this abominable engine of war. Realising that her husband had invented an arm to which the Germans themselves had fallen victims, she decided not to survive her grief. Inconsolable though he was, the scientist was obliged nevertheless to seek further improvements in this murderous product.

² *Translator's Note.* Julien Benda, in his *Trahison des Clercs*, while using the word *clerc* in the old sense, gives it at the same time a shade of actuality. The *clerc* is the man of education and culture, not quite the intellectual, not quite the pundit. He is the man who in art, letters, science, etc., has devoted his life to an intellectual mission or office that he must not betray.

It has been thought best to follow Mr. Benda and translate the word literally, trusting that the new meaning of "clerk" will be understood by English readers in the same way that *clerc* is now understood in France.

their passion. Even the desert seems passionate. The palm tree kisses its companion in the palm grove with passion; the curve of the sandhills closes passionately round the oasis; the emptiest seas, the most naked skies, are passionate. Passion is within us, and everything reveals it to us. The "clerk" himself is devoured by a violent passion—for ridding himself of passion.¹ Kant, they say, in the excitement of playing with abstract ideas, used to indulge in curious practices under cover of his professorial desk. As for myself, I do not profess to do a clerk's job. I only work in that direction.

Moreover the progress, and even the preservation, of civilisation demands the intervention of the "clerk" in France. The Camille Mauclairs have already declared war to the knife on all innovating artists, because they detect a revolutionary ferment in their art. The ferment is there—and that is how progress is accomplished. We are only at the beginning, but I can see some fine nonsense in the offing. In the Reich, as it is, any writer wishing to publish his work must sign a declaration by which he promises to write nothing that is not strictly according to the Hitlerian creed. If he wants to write only for his own benefit, and is caught at it, he tastes the sweets of the Concentration Camp. Without ink, without paper. Artists, writers, intellectuals, are forced to belong to associations severely controlled by officials, who decide whether this or that book, picture, sculpture, architecture, is allowed or forbidden. The museums are putting their "modern" pictures in their cellars, or getting rid of them. Forbidden works are publicly burnt. The Inquisition! You may think that none of this concerns you. But dare we overlook our own sedition-mongers, who are taking advantage of financial scandals

¹ Note 1936. M. Julien Benda in *La trahison des Clercs* condemned the "clerk" who is concerned with temporal things. He writes in *Jeunesse d'un Clerc* (N.R.F. August 1936): "This perhaps explains my case: I wrote against life and passion with much life and passion."

The same author, in 1937, wrote: "The mystic creed of the Left is acceptable to the clerk; that of the right is not." In Valence, where he attended the Anti-Fascists' Congress, he said: "To come to Valence is to walk in the footsteps of Spinoza."

to establish the same kind of régime here as that which is oppressing the Germans?¹

The "clerk" of 1934 wonders how, in the rough—as rough as the present realities can be!—the ideologies of the Right and of the Left can be summarised.

The Right believes in Race, and in the incurable badness and imperfectibility of Man; in War as inevitable and necessary; (therefore in harsh Leaders); in executions for the sake of order. It does not believe in Progress.

The Left believes in the possibility of creating a social conscience and a morality that will render the harsh oppressions of Dictatorships unnecessary, and in an economic organisation that will eliminate War.

At bottom, the Dictatorships of the Right are *pessimistic*; their eyes are turned towards the past. Democracies are *optimistic*, and look towards the future.

This, it seems to me, is roughly what distinguishes them. For it is conceivable that the Dictatorships may be obliged by force of circumstances to employ a Dictatorial socialistic technique; but this will not be Socialism, which implies optimism and *goodwill*.

I am aware that M. Mussolini has the sense not to make of Race an article of faith. All Rights are not Racist. But it is

¹ Note 1937. "Hitler is determined. At the Inauguration of the House of German Art in Munich, he has just declared his intention to rid German life of those hollow terms, Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, Impressionism. The Führer declaimed violently against modern painting, especially Cubism, threatening the artists of that school with all the rigours of the law, or with the surgeon's knife, which in Germany comes to much the same thing.

"An exhibition of 'Degenerate Art' has been opened. It is divided into sections: 'Manifestations of the Jewish Racial Soul.' 'Bolshevist Invasion of Art.' 'The German Woman held up to Derision.' 'Insults to Heroes.' 'Madness exalted into a Method.' 'Nature seen by diseased Minds.'

"The paintings shown in this exhibition are the works of well-known artists, not all of them German. They have been taken from the most important museums of Germany, and Herr Adolf Ziegler announces that 'the systematic purification of the German museums is to continue'.

"And then?

"Then there will doubtless be a grand exhibition by the greatest of German painters, the Master Adolf Hitler . . ." (*l'Oeuvre*).

Some of Mr. Hitler's work may be admired in *CAHIERS D'ART* 1937. These little pictures will bring tears to the eyes of some ladies among English amateur water-colour painters. It has long been recognised that Mr. Hitler is a dangerous sentimentalist.

the foundation of the Hitlerian creed. In any case no party of the Left accepts the ideology of Race, in any country. The religion of Race is therefore necessarily and exclusively an ideology of the Right.

I remember pondering the subject of Race last year, on my way home from Athens. I was led to it in this way.

I had got up early to see the shores of Hellas once more from the boat. The last headlands of Messina vanished, and that was the last of Greece for me. Heavy clouds, and then grey cloud-wrack, reminded me that I was travelling northwards. I sat brooding in my deck-chair, feeling rather blue. I fetched my rug, that I had packed away months before. The words of the Greek came back to me:

“ . . . There are the dwellings of the Cimmerians, always covered with thick clouds and black darkness. The dazzling God of day never casts his eyes upon it . . . an eternal night envelops with its funereal veil the unhappy denizens of these lands. . . . ”

Draw it mild, Poet! Still, there's some truth in it.

The Mediterranean almost makes one forget this body of ours which has to be nursed in the north like a chronic disease. Euripides says:

“Our atmosphere is mild. The winter is without harshness, and Phoebus' darts never wound us.”

It is very nearly true. Nowhere as in Greece have I felt my mind so little at the mercy of my body. (It is true that my journey had been paid for at the start, food and wine included.) The Hellenic miracle so sufficiently accounted for by the ease with which one can obtain the essentials of life. This sets the mind free. Thinking of Moscow, with her magnificent self-appointed task of giving ease, leisure, culture to the workers, I realised how formidable a task it was, in face of the heavy material needs entailed by the Russian climate. I know it well, having lived there three years.

The chillness in the air made me get up suddenly from my deck-chair. Cold excites the Northerner, schooled in the ethics of work. Every ethical system, old or new, is doubtless

a constraint engendered by inherent necessity, that the work of the community may be performed smoothly. The nature of a place dictates its laws. In the North living is expensive, and a good deal of our social Ethics has been devised so as to make it impossible for the poor to be inactive. In the North, moderation is suspect; it is mistaken for weakness. A philosopher or a Jesus, living to-day in idleness—merely thinking rightly and doing good—would be despised as a parasite. Which shows the irreconcilable antithesis between the northern spirit of toil and that part of the Christian teaching—spread from the Mediterranean via Christ—which preaches renunciation, poverty. With us the renouncing of activity is possible only to the rich, which was not altogether what Jesus intended. But by the Mediterranean, life is easy for men without ambition, and most of them consider our religion of work utterly foolish. The American hails the Neapolitan who lies dreaming on the quayside:

"Take my bag to the hotel, and I'll give you a dollar!"

"Thank you, Signor, I have had my lunch to-day."

I am not a Neapolitan, and I really felt a little ashamed of having done nothing for a month and a half except think and rest. I peeled off the film of laziness that a month of the Mediterranean had begun to deposit on me, and started striding up and down the decks. The fidgets, with us, are less reprehensible than inertia, for at least they imitate the gestures of Holy Activity. One no longer goes for a walk, one covers the ground. Everything is got through as quickly as possible, even pleasure. In America it is worse still. They no longer eat, they bolt their food without chewing it. One of these days they will grow gizzards.

I passed Mr. But, walking up and down the deck. He seized me by the arm.

"Come and listen to some pretty Turkish music."

I didn't mind. He led me to the steerage. A crowd of emigrants had come on board at Beyrout, Jaffa, Alexandria, Smyrna and the Piraeus. The poor human slugs were hardly troubling to open their eyes properly, or to answer questions.

They twitched their lips just enough to let out a minimum of sound, or to sip their drink. They were indolently listening to one of their number—a heroic soul who had summoned up sufficient energy to stroke an instrument from which rose a moaning, monotonous, dying murmur. The Mediterranean stirs these people to no more than languid variations on chants as soporific as the slow movements of the unruffled waters, the scarcely perceptible swaying of the olive-trees in the tepid breeze, the gentle gurgling of the nargilehs.

“Poor degenerate races!” sighed Mr. But.

“RACES? Degenerate? Degenerate from having mixed with their conquerors, of course? I’ve heard these ‘explanations’ before!”

“How can you deny it?” asked Mr. But. “The Greeks were emasculated by the Turkish rape.”

“First of all, who were these vigorous ancient Greek races? The Greek soil was invaded by successive waves of people, known as Achaeans, as Dorians, coming from the North, from the lands of Russia or Siberia, via Albania or Macedonia, most likely. One thing points to the origin of the men who were to be masters of Greece under the name of Hellenes: the Hellenic dialects had no word for the sea. It was described in metaphors. *‘The flat surface. The salted element. The liquid path.’* It looks very much as though these peoples, whose languages had been formed before they had caught their first glimpse of the Adriatic or the Mediterranean, did not even know of the existence of the seas. You know too, Mr. But, that the roofs of the ‘Greek’ houses, built after these invasions, were precisely of the same shape as those of northern countries. A shape perpetuated by the temples, and contrasting strangely, even to-day, with the flat Mediterranean roofs. Think of Athens as we saw it from Mount Lycabettus. Among the sea of flat roofs, only the pediment of the Parthenon and the roofs of the Theseion recalled your rains and your snows, O Barbarians! Jacques de Morgan thinks moreover that the custom of building fortresses on the heights, surrounded by walls, *‘appears to have been introduced by the peoples coming from Siberia’*.

"So you see, Mr. But, the Kremlins, Burgs, High Places of Ecbatana, Myceanae, Rome, the Rhineland, Alesia, Nijni-Novgorod, Moscow . . . are all Acropolises.

"There is therefore every reason to believe that the Mediterranean groups who constituted the Greeks, came originally from harsh climates. Siberia and Russia shaped the Barbarians, Assyria the Phoenicians and the Jews. The harshness of Africa determined certain essential constituents of the Egyptian people; the Alps forged the hardy Italiot; the extreme temperatures of the desert the Arab; the arid steppes of Central Asia the Ottoman Turk; the severity of Iran and Persia the peoples who invaded Mesopotamia . . . '

"Archeologists' theories! Most unreliable!" said Mr. But, with that quick, disdainful twist of the neck proper to those whose knowledge consists in doubting others. And immediately came out with a howler:

"Besides, Persia was a paradise. Have you never seen those exquisite Persian water-colours, with their mauve skies, their blossoming lilac, their cascades of roses . . . "

" . . . of Ispahan. My poor But, travel does not change you much. At Damascus, on the 15th August, I saw you flopping, melting like a camembert, in an armchair at the Hotel d'Orient. You had just enough strength left to 'do' the city of the famous 'gardens', under a broiling sun. You came back to the hotel, having seen nothing. The dust was so thick that it had obscured the windows of your car. And you left again for Beyrout that night, considerably reduced in weight, without having had so much as a glimpse of the miserable gardens of Damascus, that the elder-groves of Surennes would laugh to scorn. Damascus—it has a stream!—seemed no doubt an enchanting oasis to the Arabs of the desert! And you bragged to your Paris friends about the delightful greeneries of Damascus. You concocted a miraculous picture for them, made up of the Arabian Nights, the water-colours of the illustrators and the 'oriental' *tableaux-vivants* of the *Folies-Bergères*. My poor friend, don't you understand? When people sing of flowers, lawns, all the sweets of

life, it's because they haven't got any! Paradise is always invented when there is none. Poetry serves to build up the illusion of what we lack. Poetry, art—a certain kind of poetry, a certain kind of art—are 'compensations'. If the architecture of the Persians and the Arabs shows so much ingenuity in providing comfort, it's because nature offered them the exact opposite. The truth is that in the Edens where the bulbul sings to the moon for the benefit of the *décolletée* princess nibbling at a pomegranate, you perish with cold in winter, and the summer is an Inferno. In the country of Bagdad the Voluptuous, during the War, the dead of the morning were dried up by the evening, and the English piled them in heaps. They burnt like tinder."

Mr. But, who likes sticking to the point, said:

"I thought you were talking about Race, and you keep harping on Climate."

"I'm coming to it in time, I promise you. But we had to go by way of Damascus. If you like, we'll cut it short, and confine ourselves to Greece. Her history shows successive invasions by waves of 'barbarian' populations. What does that prove? That the preceding waves had soon become enervated in the soft climate of the Greek coasts. Otherwise the new invaders would have got a different welcome! Obviously, one after another, the Achaeans, Dorians, Macedonians, Romans, Turks, were on velvet. We may reasonably suppose that from the cold North, or even—which is the same thing—from the high mountain plateaux of the South, came the energy, the spunk, the hairy paws of men accustomed to fighting the extremes of nature. Transplant a weak vine from Laon in the North, to Corinth, and you will realise that one of the essential factors in the history of the Mediterranean coasts is the happy result of transplanting hardy organisms to favourable climes. The vine-stock will prosper marvellously . . . and quickly die. Before the War, the finest dessert grapes were cultivated in the forcing-houses of Tergnier in Picardy, where central heating created an artificial Eden under glass. But the stocks soon grew anaemic. The layers, prematurely exhausted,

were burnt and used to 'bring on' fresh young stocks in the hothouses. In the same way the first of the Barbarians flourished marvellously after a period of incubation on the seaboard of the Rivas, which served them as a forcing-house. But these men were rapidly *assimilated*, i.e. rendered similar to all the others whom these coasts fashion inevitably in the same mould, from no matter what original human material.

"When the era of invasions from the North came to an end, the Levantine was born, or rather re-born. We must in fact consider the Mediterranean less as the 'Cradle of Civilisation' than as the Incubator of the Barbarians. Soon to be their grave. The Greek prime lasted scarcely more than three centuries; the Roman a little longer. As for ours, over here or in America, with its central heating, its Cannes-in-the-home, we shall see about that later. Not so very much later, perhaps. Unless vigorous physical training . . . "

"And what about Egypt," interrupted Mr. But, "the longest of all civilisations, two-thirds of history?"

"Egypt, Sergius, has very little to do with the Mediterranean. The Valley of the Nile plunges deep into the Desert, and in Nubia runs towards the Tropics. The first capital, Thinis, was right inland, 375 miles as the crow flies. Memphis-Cairo was 125 miles from the sea; Thebes in the burning sands, 437 miles away (as far as from Beauvais to Marseilles); Syene, nearly 625 miles, on the Tropic of Cancer. The limits of the New Empire were in Nubia, 1,250 miles from the sea (about as far as from Strasbourg to Leningrad). It is true that Saïs, the last capital of Ancient Egypt, came quite close to the Mediterranean. And the Assyrians did not take long to conquer the Delta. Egypt was vitalised for a while by the ragged Ethiopians, who gave her a dynasty. She prospered for eighty years, then weakened, and finally fell under the yoke of hardier peoples, hardier because they had come from hardier countries: Persians, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French, English. This is a fairly solid proof of what I have been trying to demonstrate.

"All this is at variance with the ideas of the Racists.

"And the Racists are wrong from the very first. After pre-historic times there was no such thing as a pure Race. All serious anthropologists are agreed upon that."

"Yet ancient prototypes have been known to re-emerge."

"Possibly. But were these ancient types pure themselves? All 'races' nowadays consist of inextricable mixtures. If there ever were such people as 'Aryans', and if the Germans are Aryans, have they succeeded in doing in Prussia what they did in Greece?"

"The out-and-out partisans of Geography are mistaken too, since the same places have seen different civilisations. We may, however, grant them this much, that the Athenians prided themselves on quite a different origin from that of the 'barbarian' Spartans. Yet, *'originally the Spartans and Athenians were not specifically different'*.¹ It is a fact, though, that the people of Athens and Sparta soon began to differ from each other. The Dorians kept their hardiness in hardy Sparta, doubtless because the mountainous Laconian country resembled their former home. The Dorians in Athens, on the other hand, were Levantinised in the twinkling of an eye.

"As for the Economists, they go too far when they deny, or pretend to deny, the influence of habitat, and make Economics responsible for everything. I know quite well that the form of Economics in use among nations has always played an immense part. But the palm-tree does not grow in Lenin-grad, nor do fir-trees in Biskra."²

"It would seem therefore that transplanting a people only

¹ Jarde.

² *Note 1935.* Professor Mitchourine, the celebrated arboriculturist, has just died. He created species of fruit-bearing plants which would grow in the north of Russia, where there are no indigenous fruit-trees. Vines have adapted themselves to the climate of Moscow. Which means that the line of viticulture has risen 300 miles. These paradoxical results, denied for a long while by traditional horticulturists, were obtained by means of "distant hybridisation"; that is, between plants of very distant parentage and habitat. Plants from Central Asia, for instance. The wild plants gave the cultivated ones an extraordinary degree of resistance. Which goes to prove what I said earlier. I shall return to it later on.

But this fact also shows that progress sometimes gives the lie to the past and that a man may expect more of himself than history would authorise. History acts too often merely as a brake. Anyway, the time will come when man will create artificially favourable environments for himself. Even now conditions of life are growing alike in all the organised, urbanised and mechanised cities of the world. For better or for worse? Both no doubt.

turns out well when the migrant (aggregate of a quantity of reactions to environment) brings with him a capital of qualities not too antagonistic to the character of the place and of the geographical and social environment that receive him. The unpolished Dorians did, after all, adore a sort of Apollo, a poet-god. The Thracians who came from the Danube to Corinth brought with them an Orpheus. All this was a help.

"I see the great bards of Asia Minor and of Greece appearing at the fleeting moment when the Barbarian had reached a certain point of refinement, but had not lost the fine rush of the North's lyrical power. Neither Hesiod nor Homer, nor the great sculptors, architects, scientists, dramatists and philosophers of Greece, had yet become Levantines. By the time of Plato and Praxiteles Levantine Alexandrianism was already threatening. At the Parthenon Phidias makes us look back regretfully at the rough sculptors of Olympia or of the old Hecatompedon.

"The civilisation, the thought, the art of Greece were the work of UPROOTED MEN. The original jazz is the admirable work of negroes uprooted and replanted in America. 'Hot Jazz' is the work of people from everywhere, replanted in America. The ultra-French Montaigne was, they say, a Jewish slip replanted in France. The ultra-French Ronsard appears to have been a Hungarian seedling replanted in France. Napoleon was an Italian replanted in Corsica and again in Paris. The ancestors of Cézanne came from Cesena in Italy. The French are people from all over the world replanted in France,¹ the Parisians seeds of all kinds sown on the favourable banks of the Seine. The Spanish are a mixture of Vandals, Suabians, Alans, Visigoths, Arabs, Jews. (And it must be remembered that the invading peoples themselves represented mixtures of inextricable complexity.) The Germans are suckers from all the peoples or tribes that have inhabited or crossed Germany, replanted in various soils, some good, some bad. As for the English, ask them where

¹ Paul Valéry, born in France of a Corsican father and an Italian mother.

they come from, they and their bastard language, part Saxon, part French, mingled with Scandinavian, etc., etc.¹

"As an undeniable result of these uprootings, look at the activity of the Jews, the Greeks, the Spanish, the Italians, in Paris, Moscow, Berlin, Alexandria, London, New York. Compare their vigour with the relative indolence of those of their fellows who have remained in their own lands. The effect of environment is violent even during the tiny span of a lifetime. The Jews are the only people, in modern times, to 'benefit' by the pogroms that 'send them in search of new homes—migrations as profitable to them as to the peoples who receive them. If Palestine, in the neighbourhood of Tel Aviv, 'The Hill of Spring', is so energetically active, it is because of the Western Jews returning to Judaea charged with Northern energy.

"The great cosmopolitan cities are magnetic fields. Foreign migrants renew them perpetually by stimulating them. I am not referring now to a mingling of pure strains (of which, according to the best anthropologists, there are not a great many in the national contents to-day) so much as to the stimulus provided by foreigners. The alien arrives with different ideas, different ways, and is not hampered by local scruples. He has the daring of the colonist, and sometimes of the conqueror. This active competition places the settled population, always more or less conservative and inclined to sink into a rut, in a new position. Which is all to the advantage of the world. The immigrant is the yeast of the nations. My thanks to you, Jews of all sorts and countries, who have kept, and still keep, the world awake."

This, by the way, is my attitude towards the Jewish question; another of those things that divide the world in two. Ever since 1933 I have publicly defended the Jews, in company with the best Frenchmen, against Hitler and our Hitleroids. My reasons are: They are human beings. They have a right to the religion that pleases them. (Which is the mother of our own, be it remembered.)

¹ *Note 1937.* Ever since I came to live in London, I have been trying to make a little collection of "real Englishmen". It is very difficult.

Their contribution to civilisation. This tiny people of from ten to fifteen millions, scattered over the face of the earth, has given humanity a considerable number of geniuses, even before Jesus; and how many since?

If Egypt, Greece and Rome affect our civilisation, it is now only through their past. The Jews, through their living great men, are still fertilising the world with the spirit of the Mediterranean.

Their kindness. I have experienced it. Every time life has thrown me overboard, some Jew has, wholly disinterestedly, held out a lifebuoy. Why a Jew? I am not a Jew but a Catholic by heredity; and I know of no Jew among my ancestors or my present family.

From childhood up, I have always got on very well with them. Perhaps because in some ways my mind resembles theirs. It is abstract and realist at the same time. Like the Jews, I am fond of the Abstract, but I want the mind to have a solid footing. They are men of action, and yet Talmudists; sensible and lyrical at the same time. You have only to think of those queer salesmen who forget to take your order, in the abstract joy of having sold something.

There is also my admiration:

For their unbreakable power of resistance in face of constant iniquitous persecution.

For their realism.

For their idealism.

For their sense of humanity.

For the lofty collective conscience that upholds Israel through the ages.

It is because Anti-semitism, which is raging in Germany and elsewhere, may break out at any time, anywhere, that I have written this.

When I read it to Mr. But, whose sister-in-law is a Jewess, he exclaimed triumphantly:

“That’s the limit! Aren’t the Jews the one race that can lay claim to racial purity? They are passionately keen on it themselves.”

•

"It is true that the idea of common origins, sufferings, religion, and the perpetual sense of being a persecuted minority, has, among the less educated, taken the mystic form of racial feeling; and among the best, that of a community of ethics. I deny the existence of Race, but not the reality of a feeling of Race. Take the trouble to think a little, and to look about you, at the same time. You would have great difficulty in squeezing that great fair Jew with blue eyes and a long nose into the mould of that little dark, snub-nosed fellow. How many Jews are there who don't look Jewish, to one 'Aryan' who does? Renan once said that there was not one but many Jewish types. That is still the opinion of the specialists.¹ You can see it for yourself with the naked eye. But how many people have naked eyes."

"Don't you think," said Mr. But, after prolonged consideration, "that by preventing a people from breeding out, one could purify it?"

"Theoretically, no doubt. Given a long, long time, Mr. Hitler's regulations might perhaps manufacture a sort of vast in-bred tribe. Unfortunately consanguinity seems a thing to be dreaded rather than desired. It is probable that peoples too carefully selected would fare like the families that die out for lack of crossing. Remember the tainted heredity of the Habsburgs. On the other hand, the very mixed peoples, such as the British, the French, the Germans, the Americans, appear to owe their 'polyvalency' to their cross-breeding.

"We may therefore suppose that if the Jewish 'Race' is gifted, it's because it is not so pure as all that." (What I am saying will not please all the Jews perhaps. Never mind. This book is full of disagreeable things for everybody, myself included.)

Mr. But opened his mouth and asserted:

"Of course it would be possible to take the opposite view. All the same, it seems plausible. Only it is a source of strength to the Jews as well as to the Germans, to look upon themselves as a race."

¹ Salomon Reinach, Weissenberg, Luschan, Chantre, etc.

"Agreed, Mr. But. I've said so before. I was just going to tell you a couple of stories which show that the belief in Race, however absurd, can have quite serious consequences.

"I once knew a charming Smyrniote, whose first name was Artaxerxes. He had just read in his history book that certain Greeks had settled in Asia Minor about two thousand years before Christ, and had jumped to the conclusion that they were his forefathers. I watched my Artaxerxes swelling from day to day with the glory of his descent from so glorious a 'race'. He became a nuisance with his 'blue blood'. I explained to him that the expelled Greeks, whom he flattered himself he was descended from, were not the true, splendid Hellenes, but the primitive Achaeans, who had fled before the Dorians across the water. Here was my Smyrna fellow in a fix. Was he a Greek, or wasn't he? A cruel enigma. How could he face the thought of being an Achaean?

"*Belief* in Race may be constructive. It makes all the sheep of the Third Reich stick together. (I'm not saying there are none but sheep in the Reich, nor that all the Jews are Racists.) I fancy Mr. Hitler believes in Race, and that Messrs. Goebbels and Goering don't. For them it is a mere trick of statecraft. I have a horror of tricks.

"Here is another instance. Charles (who used to polish my floors) the son of a concierge father and doorkeeper mother, discovered that his mother had once been a good-looking wench, and that when she was employed in the faubourg Saint-Germain, she had sometimes 'obliged' in the household of the Archbishop of Paris. Forthwith he took it into his head that he, Charles, might well be the son of the 'friend of the Pope', the friend of God, almost. Looking in the glass, and comparing himself with a photograph of His Eminence, he detected a flattering likeness. There was no doubt about it! He bought himself collars in keeping with his origin, frequented Church Guilds, dreamed of the Crusades, turned Conservative. If his mother had gone charing at Lenin's when he was living in the rue Marie-Rose, Charles to-day might be wearing a

red tie. Thus are lives, vocations, crimes and empires sometimes built on fancy.

"A third story: Madame L . . . , a good honest soul, has her fortune told by coffee-grounds for fifty francs. The turbaned sorceress reveals her past. She is of royal descent, a reincarnation of a Pharaoh's wife of Memphis. Now she must needs encumber her scraggy neck with necklaces of sham lapis-lazuli, copies from the jewels in the Cairo Museum. In the fat lobes of her ears she hangs Turkish pendants as huge as chandelier ornaments. She adopts a hieratic carriage of the head, contrives always to be seen in profile, drapes her nightcap to look like a *pschent*, dresses by day in tarnished gold brocades, and disrobes of an evening *à l'almée*. She tries to smoke a nargileh, lights her room dimly with lamps from a mosque, piles cushions everywhere, attitudinising on them like an odalisque, and writes risky *vers libres* in the style of the Arabian Nights. She feels humiliated when she has to travel second class, is forever burning aromatic pastilles, and dines by the light of pink, twisted candles. She insists on being addressed as Meryem-Galswinth instead of Marie. She puts flies into little gilt cages, and begs them tearfully to forgive her for having deprived them of their liberty, pointing out at the same time that any one else would have killed them outright. By way of dessert she gives them putrid meat and chocolate, to encourage their amours.

"'But why not let them out?'

"She hadn't thought of that, she says.

"But in reality the fool thinks it would be a less beautiful act of benevolence on the part of a Great Lady of High Lineage towards the meanest of her subjects.

"She insists on blind obedience to herself, and deceives her husband with an astrologer (magic and magician) or some soldier or other (Cleopatra). Her motto, engraved, embroidered, written in gold all over the place, is:

"'Reine ne daigne. Pharaonne fus. Race oblige.'

"Her whole life is controlled by this absurd notion.

"There must be some special power in absurdity."

Mr. But laughed.

"Have you any more stories to tell me?"

"One more if you like, and that shall be the last. It is dedicated to Mr. Hitler:

"Little more than three hundred centuries ago, a Proto-Berlinese, a prodigiously hairy, flax-blond troglodyte patriarch of the Blue Wolf tribe, was sitting before the door of his cave, in the company of his daughter, a very pretty brunette. Dandling on his knee his little grandson, a hideous sandy-haired brat, he told for the thousandth time the traditional tale of his sacred tribe. It had come from the East—and he pointed to the East with the majestic patriarchal forefinger. He was proud of his tribe, the noblest, purest of all the tribes from the Orient. (Everybody knows that the handsomest, noblest, and purest tribes came originally from the Orient. Everybody repeats it with satisfaction, because all the races of Europe flatter themselves that they came from there. You know, the country where . . . the country which . . . well, you know what I mean.) The old führer delighted greatly in the idea that no foreign blood had ever dared pollute the purity of his blond Eastern tribe, and that his girls and boys were of the oldest, noblest, purest of Aryan tribes. His almond-eyed daughter listened to his quavering speech, plaiting the strands of her astonishingly black hair the while. Her lips were parted in an innocent smile, which her old Papa ascribed to her extreme fondness for the purity of her ancient tribe—the oldest, the noblest, *theirs* in a word. But the smile was ironical. The noble grandfather, whose nose was very short, and who could hardly see beyond it, was unaware that his daughter used often to go into the forest to meet a great red-haired fellow, of a tribe which had likewise come from the East, but via the North—the tribe of the Red Wolf. These outings throw a crude light on the origin of certain carrotty gleams in the hair of his sandy grandson, which the old gentleman described as a beautiful, luminous, rather warm Oriental gold. And if the dear old boy had known the whole, true story of his noble, pure and ancestral family, he would have died on the spot.

He would have learnt that in the course of several thousand years, many a little gleam, from caroty-red to boot-polish black or Venetian gold, could have been explained by the like sentimental strolling in sentimental woods.

“Moral: Look at the vast Russian plains surging into the funnel of Germany, whose stem is pointed towards France. It is through that spout that, from the earliest times, the invasions and migrations from the East—your East—have passed. And passed again. Were they so chaste, those fellows of the steppes, as they went through Germany? Were they saving themselves for Montmartre?

“Ah, my Chellean, Aurignacian, Magdalenian and other grandfathers, you were very Gallic even then! Electrical loves of my grandmothers, light-o’-loves of the flint-chippers of all races. Invasions and black amours of the negroid races of pre-history, O Gobineau! Invasions, occupations, comings and goings of the Ligurians, Iberians, Cimbrians, Celts, Belgae, etc. . . . Commercial routes of the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans:

““See, pretty lady, my beautiful cloth—just the colour to suit you. And this fine necklace . . . ’

““It’s too dear! Much too dear for me!’ says she with a mincing air.

““Oh, no! Not for you, my Beauty. And if you were to be kind . . . ’

“Then don’t be astonished if the next baby has a little Phoenician nose, a Greek profile, a touch of the Roman or the Mongol about him. (I should very much like to know who were the ancestors of Clémenceau and Poincaré, and of Messrs. Goebbels and Goering.)”

“Ha-ha-ha!” said Mr. But.

“Moral Number Two: I pride myself on the impurity of my blood. I have forebears in Flanders, in Normandy, in Picardy, in Spain. If old atoms reawaken, I am suddenly a Fleming or a Scandinavian. Sometimes an echo reminds me that I have something of the Ripuarian Frank in me; another day, for all I know, it may be a Moor or a Jew taking a hand.

THANKS TO ALL MARRIAGES, RAPES AND
CUCKOLDINGS,
I AM THEIR GRATEFUL SON."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" said Mr. But. "This is Polyracism!"

"Anyway, it's quite certain that the French and the Germans are cousins . . . "

" . . . german! Ha, ha, ha!" said Mr. But wittily. He was in very good form to-day.

"He, he, he!" I replied. "It would be a very good thing if Germans and French could be convinced of it. It would prevent them thinking that their supposedly different race destined them for ever to mutual destruction."

"They would fight each other just the same," said Mr. But as he left the room.

Is there any good reason for believing in the inevitability of War?

It would at least afford some justification for the ideologies of the Right.

This time my interlocutor was not Mr. But, who was out of Paris, doing a term of military service as an officer of the Reserves. My adversary was a certain young noodle, whom we will call Bernard—a true Fascist, of the rabid sort, proudly and stupidly brimming over with all the old clichés about "glorious war". To lead him on and make him rattle off his patter, which I've heard thousands of times from him and so many others, I asked him:

"Do you think we're in for war? Things are looking bad, aren't they?"

"War is inevitable. Definitely. But I shouldn't say 'things are looking bad'. Strong, healthy people like the sight of blood. It has a fresh, virile smell about it; and what a colour for a painter! You writers, you intellectuals and artists, are all weaklings, dreamers. Now *I'm* a sportsman. And War is the highest form of sport. Definitely!"

Bernard worked all his joints, and distended his biceps and

cheeks to their utmost. (Perhaps one day they will burst.) He emptied his cheeks slowly, blowing through his lips that he had screwed up like a hen's behind. He ended by whistling a fox-trot, and said:

"War forges and re-forges the energies that the intellectuals, the ideologists, the cranks, the visionaries . . . "

" . . . pacifists . . . "

"Precisely! The pacifist utopians. . . . All those funksticks relax the energies of the country. We must fight them ruthlessly. Woe to the people that lets Durandal rest in its scabbard!"

Tilting his nose in Gallic fashion, he struck a modestly heroic attitude, like a toreador, or the portrait of some historic warrior contemplating from afar "his" victory, and went on:

"*I'm* like my ancestors the Crusaders, like the knights of the Middle Ages, like my grandfathers who died in the service of the King in the great centuries of our history, when pacifism had not yet emasculated our unfortunate France. Like my forebear Gontrand, the hardy soldier, who preferred the bare ground to his bed, and knew how to die for Louis XVIII on the battlefields of the ignoble Revolution. Like Roland at Roncevaux, Jeanne d'Arc and Marie-Anne-Charlotte-Corday, death on the Field of Honour, for God and the King, has no terrors for me! None whatever! Hurrah for a glorious death on the battlefield!"

His tirade seemed to have tired him a bit. But above all he was in a hurry to ring up his girl friend. When he had done talking telephone twaddle to his Lucette, and praising the supple form of this charmer for my benefit, he got up again.

"Ah, yes, that kid Lucette . . . a nice little girl . . . definitely! What were we talking about?"

"You were talking of the beauties of War."

"Just so! Lucette is not only beautiful and lively . . . I beg your pardon . . . *War* is a lively and beautiful thing. Definitely! Pretty girls for the conqueror! They come running to the conqueror's bed, on the night of the victory. War brings about the selection of the fittest."

"Forgive a man of the Left for thinking exactly the opposite. The man who survives a modern war is the 'lucky' one—the coward, or the unfit for service. Selection the other way round."

"Absurd! The nations are always re-vitalised by war."

"Example: France left bloodless after the twenty years of the Napoleonic Wars, which manufactured as many corpses as the war of 1914. A blood-letting from which the historians think she has never recovered. Will she ever recover from the blood-letting of 1914? She is still gasping from it, physically and morally."

"What rubbish! You Utopians of the Left are dangerously naïve. Really! We Leaders of the Right, rulers by inheritance for centuries, we know how to govern. We can make the tomb fertilise the cradle: Mars sleeps with Venus. And when the nation is in need of soldiers, we have only to start the right propaganda for future warriors to be born. The Church aids and abets us. At other times we slow up the birth-rate. For instance, at the present time, the English Masters, with consummate art—really!—fearing that unemployment may increase, and the dregs of the populace get the upper hand, are discreetly encouraging, for all they are so puritanical, the distribution of medicines and appliances to the people. In the poorer parts of London Malthus has his Birth-Control Clinics. These clear-sighted Leaders will be prepared to cast shame on Malthusianism, as soon as the country is obliged to contemplate raising an army, or filling the gaps made by the next war. Definitely!"

"I admire your shrewdness, Bernard. What if I tell you that I know all about your tricks? Machiavelli and the rest are not only sold to the Leaders of the Right, and London is not at the world's end.

"Shall we look at the question more realistically? You pride yourself on being a realist. Take the fabulous cost of war. The last one killed 10,261,900 men. The death of a single man cost 600,000 francs.¹ Mere economic common sense, so

¹ Note 1937. Gold francs.

The great poet Paul Claudel, once a glorious Ambassador of France, had the audacity to say, "This success alone (the re-taking of Alsace-Lorraine) was worth

to speak, is revolted by it. It is true that these milliards were not lost as far as everybody was concerned. Neither for those who pocketed huge cheques, nor for those who benefited by these mass executions—the costliest that the world has ever organised.”

“They stimulated trade!” said Bernard, cynically facetious.

Controlling myself, I replied:

“I should have thought trade would have been just as much stimulated if the States had spent the six milliards on *peaceable public works*.”¹

the sacrifice of 1,500,000 men, and I know not how many milliards” (Paul Claudel in *Paris-Soir*, quoted by Vendredi).

There are people so generous that nothing is too dear for them. Perhaps you think Bernard is invented or caricatured?

Montesquieu: “We are poor with the wealth and the commerce of the whole universe; and soon, from having soldiers we shall have nothing but soldiers, and we shall be like the Tartars.”

Germany, France, England, Italy, Poland, U.S.S.R., U.S.A., from 1936 to 1939, spent 654 milliards francs on their armaments.

Note 1938. The French Budget for 1939 is made up of £83,000,000 for ordinary expenses and £140,000,000 for special defence expenditure. The total figure represents 85 per cent of the fiscal resources of France in 1938 and two-thirds of the resources of 1939.

¹ *Note 1937*. The following statistics were exhibited at the Stand of the Co-opération Intellectuelle, at the Paris Exhibition:

For the price of one military cartridge you can have:

- 1 bottle of milk
- 1 bunch of violets
- 1 book
- 1 tube of aspirin
- 1 evening at the cinema.

For the price of one rifle:

- 1 canoe
- 1 bicycle
- 1 musical instrument
- 1 suit made to measure
- 1 holiday at the seaside

For the price of one machine-gun:

- 1 bathing pool
- Several years' rent
- 100 baths
- 1 incubator
- 1 threshing-machine

For the price of one big gun:

- 1 workshop
- 1 tractor
- 1 Rest Home
- 10,000 days' wages for a workman

For the price of one bomber you can have:

- 2 passenger aeroplanes
- 1 Garden City
- 1 research laboratory
- 1 children's playground
- 1 metal footbridge

For the price of one tank:

- 1 crèche
- 1 university building
- 1 lighthouse
- 1 wireless station
- 1 holiday colony

For the price of one submarine:

- 1 school unit that would do away with over two acres of slums
- 1 harbour station
- 1 barrage

For the price of one ironclad:

- 1 underground line
- 1 scientific expedition
- 1 hospital
- Electric plant and supplies for a whole country

For the price of one Dreadnought:

- The equipment of a modern port
- Several Technical Institutes
- 1 big modern railway-station

- A complete group of hospitals and laboratories for medical research
- 600 km. of roadway

"My dear sir," said Bernard, "now you are talking sense, for once. How are slumps to be dealt with? By Socialism or by War. Socialism would raise the condition of the rag, tag and bobtail to a scandalous degree, and the people would shoot us down. Once we, the Leaders by right of rank and age-long experience, had gone, the country would dissolve into the lowest form of Anarchy. By means of war, the aristocracy overcomes slumps, and at the same time keeps its power. For the greater good of the whole nation, needless to say. So that the great art of governing includes that of keeping a potential war always simmering, in case of need.

"And you may be sure that in the next war we shall be careful to send the dirty Socialists, the Communists and other vermin, the enemies of Capital and of the Country, on 'special' missions, so that we may not see them again in peace-time."¹

This was as much as I could listen to, and shoving this unsavoury customer towards the door, I said:

"I know you consider, too, that war destroys 'useless mouths'. Now you must be aware that the poor, by reason of their numbers, are the greatest consumers, thereby providing the rich with their wealth. If you send them to the war to be killed, who will buy your peace-time products? Who will make you rich?"

Did he take it in, I wonder?

My good But turned up in a dazzling uniform. He thinks it suits him, and was anxious to show off as a Captain of Reserves. I expected to find him an out-and-out Militarist. Far from it.

"Just fancy, they made us do manœuvres in gas masks! Nasty, hideous things! You can hardly breathe inside them."

"How do you recognise each other?"

"Mmmm . . . not easily. We looked like a herd of anonymous pigs being driven to the slaughterhouse."

¹ Note 1937. Bernard's idea has been literally applied in the war waged by the Fascists on Spain—with the help of international capital. All Socialists, Communists, Democrats are being systematically killed. They call it a Crusade against Communism.

Mussolini, in a threat to France, has just declared:

"Not only do we not fear war; we do not hate it."

I told him of my conversation with that brute, Bernard. He seemed rather shocked by it. Mr. But, like so many other people, has stupid ideas on the subject of war. But he is not low-minded. He wants peace; only he thinks mankind incapable of keeping the peace.

"Darwin, whom I rather dislike because he made us descend from the apes, saw clearly that the Earth is a field of wholesale slaughter, where every creature lives by the death of others. Crushing, killing, stinging, poisoning, biting, chewing, digesting, assimilating each other. Some kill for sheer pleasure. Some plants devour insects. The world's chemistry is on a basis of mutual destruction. How can you expect man to escape this general law?"

"Simply because man is man. Even supposing war were proved to be a need of nature, all the more reason to reject it. Civilisation was not born of instincts in a state of anarchy. On the contrary, civilisation has been built up under the action of a discipline, often a harsh one, which restrains certain instincts. Every instinct of to-day moreover is not necessarily a primitive urge; many are acquired, artificial urges. This pretended urge to murder, for instance, is a very doubtful one. It is far more difficult to prevent people from stealing than from killing. The statistics of the tribunals are quite clear as to that. How many murderers are there to a hundred thousand thieves?"

"The guillotine, the gallows, the electric chair . . . "

"Possibly. All the same, if man really enjoyed killing so much, I should have thought he would kill a great deal more. Try and prevent him from making love, by imposing the same penalties as for crime, and see how you succeed. No law, whatever the penalty attached to it, can have any effect against an unconquerable instinct. That is a self-evident truth. You were talking of apes, our more or less first cousins, our unlucky cousins. They rarely fight, and then only for love. There is every reason to believe that our forefathers did not fight much. At any rate in this country, in the Early Stone Age, the remains suggest that primitive Man was pacific. It is true that

M. Marcel Beaudoin has just found a prehistoric dorsal vertebra in the Lozère, with the marks of a blow from a flint. Dr. Charles Richet sees in this a proof of the existence of war in very ancient times, which must have pleased the neo-de Maistre people like Bernard.¹ And yet it may just as well have been an accident, or a crime of passion. It is true that a certain rock-painting at Morella la Vella, in Spain, shows a fight between negro archers; but these frescoes appear to be relatively modern. In Palæolithic times there was plenty of game, consequently no need of war. People had not yet begun killing each other on account of over-production, as they are doing to-day. So long as there was plenty of wild cattle, property had little or no *raison d'être*. As livestock grew scarcer, reserves had to be organised. A 'right' was instituted: the right to defend by 'police' action one's provisions or one's hunting territory against the new pillagers. War must have developed out of the extension of the police idea, when temptation came to raid the property of others, that is to say, to use their gangs for stealing purposes. For it was quite early considered right to do in gangs what it was wrong to do singly.

"*When several men are together they are always right,*" runs the negro proverb.

"Gang rights became law.² When gangs with common interests were unified, rudiments of nations came into being. From the nations great things were born. To-day they seem to be exhausted, unable to maintain themselves except by immense and frequent massacres, destructive of the very substance of nations: their nationals. It is perhaps time that sincere Nationalists should themselves find some solution other than war.

"Do you remember, Mr. But, what we said when we were coming away from the Propylæe, full of the beauty of the

¹ Note 1937. This would please them too: "Sir Arthur Keith, the most distinguished English anthropologist, says in the preface to a book devoted to the theories of Darwin, that he thinks there will always be wars, and that 'we shall always have to sleep with loaded guns beside us'" (*Paris-Soir*).

² Note 1937. "It is stated in the laws of the Saxon Ina (end of the 7th century), 'We call men robbers if their group does not number more than seven persons. If they are between seven and thirty-five, they are a band. If they are more than thirty five they are an army'" (Maurois, *Histoire d'Angleterre*, 1937).



Acropolis? I pointed out to you the walls of that admirable edifice, left unfinished. The Greeks' warring against each other had exhausted their country for ever. Never again was there time or strength to complete the masterpiece. And yet most of the wars were clearly considered very clever moves by the shrewd and serious-minded leaders of the 'most intelligent people of the ancient world'. And they were gigantic mistakes. Athens destroyed herself, and destroyed Greece, by introducing into her politics the narrowest form of Particularism, that is, Nationalism; the drug that is served out to the armies and the people to rouse them to fight commercial or financial competition, and to conquer new markets, to the greater glory of their country. The masters of Athens, too, cultivated the lowest form of patriotism, a stupidly jealous patriotism, such as is leading Europe to destruction. One after the other, the enemy cities mistook the dying spasms of Greece for victory. The miserable history of the causes of that downfall is one of the lessons suggested by the Acropolis. It teaches us that Nationalism is the unpardonable error by which, one day or another, the nations themselves must perish."

"I have no answer to that," said Mr. But.

"So you agree that man only fought, and still only fights, to conquer territory and property, or to preserve wealth? Even to-day the old oligarchies are leading the peoples to battle, as they have always done, to maintain their privileges, and to increase or safeguard their profits and the sources of their profits.

"What would happen therefore, if, by means of a good form of Socialism, war became useless? This system *would* automatically make it useless to all, if only by suppressing slumps. What would happen then?"

"Peace!"

"Bravo, Mr. But."

"Only, you see," he went on, "I don't believe in it."

"That's it. You think that . . . or rather you don't think; you dare not think. You keep saying to yourself, like all resigned persons, '*There have always been wars. It has always been the same. It-will-always-be-the-same.*'"

"Let me say again, however, that I don't for one moment believe war can be avoided, so long as there are systems and persons interested in war. That is to say so long as Socialism has not been organised, and organised over at least a great part of Europe. In such a way that its power, linked with the armies of the Socialist Union, will constitute a force whose interest will be Peace. A force of such might that no one will even dream of attacking the Socialist Peace Coalition. Until then there is, alas, nothing to be done but to let the democratic nations arm without respite against Fascism—and ceaselessly prepare for Socialism.

"I hope fervently that all Pacifists will see this necessity.

"Unfortunately there are too many kindly Pacifists, of the R.S.P.C.A. sort, who believe Machine-Capitalism to be compatible with Peace. Capitalism's interest is War."

"Well, then," said Mr. But, who clings to his little popular objections, "why does Socialist Russia keep a powerful army?"

"Come now, Mr. But, use your brains. The Revolution was faced with the whole of Europe in arms attacking it. The invasion of Russia in 1918 by the French, the English, the Poles, the Czechs, . . . and Koltchak; doesn't that mean anything to you? Don't you remember? You're not the only one who doesn't. And do you take Japan for a lamb? And Hitler's Germany? Let's be serious, Mr. But.

"One of the tragic things about the Socialist Union is that it has to devote an immense amount of effort to the creation of enormous armaments, instead of devoting it at once to an enormous improvement of the people's standard of living. What is admirable, what proves the value of the system, is that it is raising that standard none the less. Do be fair to this immense people of 120 million souls, which I saw, before the War, stagnating in the remotest Middle Ages, and which, in the space of a few years, has brought about such an immense progress. Not without colossal labour, and harsh laws, and a violence that is of course not to my liking. But civilisation, like any other artificial creation, calls for a great effort. What can

be more agreeable and more easy than begetting a child? What is more laborious, slow, and often painful for the parents (and for the child) than to make of it a civilised, cultivated being?"

"What's this? What's this?" said Mr. But. "You who are so fond of nature and natural things. . . . Look here! Are you saying that civilisation is artificial?"

"What do you suppose? Of course, civilisation is a human creation. Call it *Natural* if you like, in the sense that nothing can be done without the consent of Nature. But you must call it *Artificial*, if you agree to use that term for a thing modified by a human agency.

"To go back to what I was saying, a child abandoned at birth to the care of Nature, or of the Board of Guardians, is certainly not very artificial. But a child amorously and consciously conceived, carefully brought into the world, with its navel cord neatly tied, reared perhaps in an incubator, scientifically fed, saved from the croup by an injection of Messrs. Behring and Roux's artificial serum, well cared for, well trained, well educated, well doped with moral and intellectual precepts—a child like that is in part artificial, 'as it were' (as one of our great writers often says, when it suits the rhythm of his sentence, or he doesn't want to commit himself, and yet wants to look as though he did). This child, I repeat, is just as artificial as the pearl that the clever pearl-fisher produces by sticking a little, sharp piece of mother-of-pearl into the flesh of a healthy oyster. You have a natural oyster, an artificial generating trick, and a semi-artificial pearl. Jewellers call them '*Cultured Pearls*'. A very good name. Cultivated men are a mixed product like these so-called pearls. They are *Cultured Men*. Child culture helps the organism to develop healthily. The teacher sticks nuclei of culture into the young creature."

"I had heard of the cruel methods of the makers of forced pearls," said Mr. But. "When they insert the splinter of mother-of-pearl, it hurts the oyster. The unfortunate creature's defensive secretions envelop the foreign body and form a

pearl. In the same way your methods of physical and mental culture may easily ruin the child."

"There is a risk in it. Some oysters die of the injection. But don't forget that 'natural' pearls are themselves caused by wounds in the oyster, following on the introduction of a foreign body, or the chance bite of a parasite. 'Chance' is the only difference. The intentional art of the pearl-fisher consists in placing the splinter in the tissues with sufficient force to produce the reaction, but not enough violence to affect the health of the animal—which would render the operation useless. Breuil, the writer on pre-history, says:

'Art in the widest sense of the term signifies the artificial modification of a natural object, according to a pre-conceived technique.'

"It goes without saying that the injection of cells of culture into people's brains is not unaccompanied by injury. Is this injury unavoidable? Or rather, is it not necessary? Suppose, Mr. But, that you stick into your head some nice, upsetting idea, such as we hit upon at times in our conversations. No doubt you will feel as though you had something inside your skull that bothers, and even hurts you. If you have an oyster mind, your defensive reactions will take it upon them to encyst the idea—and you will not come out with a pearl. But if you are something better than a mollusc, this injury will excite you, and you will meditate upon this carefully preserved mental theme. Which may sometimes provide you with unforeseen intellectual or moral benefit. The workings of reactionary thought are curiously like defensive reactions trying to eliminate a foreign body. Innovating thought is like the action of an oyster congratulating itself on the intervention of the fisher, and taking advantage of the arrival of the new force to attempt the manufacture of a new idea. It may be a useful one, or merely beautiful—even that has its value.

"These struggles between conservative and innovating forces are everywhere constant and universal. Through the ages, the vegetable and animal species that had a long pos-

terity were those which were able to adapt themselves to exterior material changes. As for the human groups, those that have not sunk into decay through conservatism, are those that have been able to adapt themselves to new material, intellectual and moral conditions. Thought, too, can only be saved by adapting itself. Men are ceaselessly at work creating civilisation in advance of themselves, and at the same time having to adapt themselves to it.

"Those that civilise must often begin by wounding—not only others, but at times even themselves.

"What does it matter?

"Isn't it a good thing?"

"Would the great creators who have made life worth living, ever have done anything if circumstances and education had not introduced into their brains the germs of curiosity, of desire, of knowledge; doubts and stimulating questions?

"Would the mass of civilised mankind ever have benefited by the destructive activity of the builders of progress, if the latter had not themselves suffered violence? And it is by doing violence, purposely, that they civilise."

"Great men, by teaching the weak to think, started them on the road to error!"

"Your style is improving, Sergius But. That's a fine phrase . . ."

"It's not mine, but Vauvenargue's."

"Then I'd discard it, if I were you. Let the weak go hang. By the bye, did that sceptic suggest that the strong injure the strong? Didn't he also say:

'The law of the mind is the same as that of the body, which cannot maintain itself without continual nourishment'?

"And all food is a necessary opportunity offered to the organs of fighting a chemical battle, the outcome of which is life.

"Culture is a means of civilisation. I say this so that you mayn't tell me, as you are dying to do, that I am confusing culture with civilisation."

"And what about the poor beggars with whom the operation was unsuccessful? The failures? The disabled victims of civilisation?"

"There is nothing to be had in this world without a certain amount of breakage. In many countries to-day children are being carefully sorted out. Vocational guidance, based on knowledge of the human being, is making rapid progress. Russia is paying great attention to it. In France, Dr. Laugier¹ and his colleagues have invented new techniques, which will lessen the undeniable risks of culture for the non-gifted, and prevent us from trying to turn the congenitally blind into painters, or a would-be painter into a statesman.

"We are not going to civilise *backwards* under pretext of encouraging our failures. We want progress, in and through the best individuals of all classes.

"The task of the educator is certainly a risky one. Like the Japanese pearl-fishers, he must have a light hand. And the hand is not really light that lacks strength, superabundant, restrained strength, the secret of true, virile gentleness.

"Let us accept the idea: Civilisation is a work of art, and man the artist of the universe."

There was a silence.

Mr. But was cogitating.

And as too often happens, his reflections only produced an idea already "reflected", so to speak, by others. Those Others, those innumerable Others, who in the name of Tradition, the Motherland, History, the Church, and all the rest of it, in France and elsewhere, are perpetually up in arms against everything that betrays a little generosity. Oh, those sickening, innumerable Others, whose objections paralyse progress to such an inconceivable degree! Listen to this one, M. Regnier, who has the face to say:

"This is perhaps not the time to increase grants for scientific research. We hear many complaints of over-production. It is said

¹ Note 1937. Now Director of Scientific Research in France.

that mechanisation is going ahead too fast. Is this a time for encouraging scientific research which will perhaps merely embarrass us?"

"Now hold tight, Mr. But! This M. Regnier, this obscure person, is actually a Minister of France!

"Let us analyse his suggestion. Note first of all those two cowardly perhapses. And then, who are 'we', whom progress would embarrass?"

"France, I suppose."

"Don't you believe it, Mr. But. He means Capital, and nothing else. Capital, through one of its usual megaphones, is crying aloud that progress would get in the way of 'Us'—that is, the handful of potentates who mean to go on benefiting by their present privileges, even at the risk of destroying progress altogether. I must say the meanness of such a 'notion' sickens me, and I am dumbfounded that M. Regnier should not even be aware of its meanness; that he should display it so engagingly on the platform of our country—whose civilisation is her pride. He ought to blush. He makes me blush, as a Frenchman, for our country.

"Well, let us forget the contemptible M. Regnier. He is only repeating what M. Caillaux, that big bug of politics and finance, said before him. (And he is a cultivated man.) He said:

"Chain up the Prometheus of Science. . . . Science will be the death of man."

Mr. But: "Of course! The more educated workers there are, the more rebels there will be."

"That, in plainer words, is what M. Caillaux went on to say:

*'It is important above all to put a brake on the legal over-production of intellectual forces. It tends to the de-classing of society, by producing a crowd of semi-proletarians, inclined to rebellion.'*¹

¹ Note 1936. The Minister of National Education of the Front Populaire has secured the raising of the school age, and brought about useful reforms in the

"That's clear enough. 'De-classing' is delightful! Let everyone stay put. I, Caillaux, at the top, and you at the bottom. Mr. Hitler thinks the same. He has limited the number of certificated scholars who may go in for higher study to 10,000 a year, and reduced by 50% in one year the number of pupils in the Technical Schools. Professorships have been suppressed by the hundred. He has reformed the 'B.A.' A student who gets good marks in Gymnastics may redeem his zeros in intellectual matters. It's all very well to give everyone, Intellectuals included, a strong, sound body. But this equalisation of marks threatens us with a dangerous generation of graduates strong only in physical culture.

"It is true that in France to-day a number of engineers, Polytechnic students, Central School graduates, Intellectuals, are without a job. So that there are actually too many educated people, having regard to the absurd régime which is forced upon us. And yet the percentage of conscripts unable to read or write amounts to 8.54 per cent (the same proportion as in 1892) representing 19,300 illiterate conscripts. And this accounts only for the illiterate soldiers of one military class. If we were to add the women, and the illiterates of the preceding generations, we should arrive at a total of millions of 'entirely' illiterate persons living in France. And that is not all. M. Clement Vautel has just said in *Le Journal* :

"More and more of the "children of the people" are being driven into the Halls of Learning. . . . There would

organisation of teaching. Grants for research have been enormously increased. The statesmen engaged in this good work are M. Jean Zay, Huisman, Dr. Henri Laugier, Jean Perrin.

Note 1937. Extract from the Resolution passed by the Congress of the Radical-Socialist Party of October 28th, moved by the Minister Jean Zay:

" . . . to prepare legislative and administrative measures to ensure that every child in France is really given a primary education."

The budget of National Education has been considerably increased.

Russia is working hard in the same direction. In a book in which he makes a sharp attack on Stalinism, André Gide says nevertheless:

" . . . There is perhaps nothing I admire so much in U.S.S.R. as the educational facilities now almost everywhere within the reach of the humblest workers, allowing them (for it rests entirely with themselves) to rise above their precarious condition."

be some sense in it if they were given their diplomas on real parchment. They could boil and eat them, as Charlie Chaplin eats his boots, so daintily, in the "Gold Rush".'

"A good joke that, eh, Mr. But? I know M. Vautel is one of your spiritual guides, as he is of so many people."

"Mr. Ozenfant, I'm not saying that's Vautel at his best. But you must admit that it's simply idiotic to make people waste their time at school, when they will only die of starvation afterwards, in spite of their education."

"There we have it! People in this country have not yet grasped the fact that education is neither a luxury nor a trade. It is simply a right—and a duty—towards oneself and others. It is quite true that an educated workman is only too often looked upon as a *déclassé*. That is what M. Caillaux thinks. He considers culture a luxury reserved for a few—for an aristocracy. That is only one remove from the opinion of those aristocrats—there are still a few of them in England, it appears—who think that wealth and titles absolve one from being educated. Whereas in the delightful countries of the North, that are truly democratic and cultivated—Sweden, Norway, Holland, Finland—education is widespread. There are hardly any illiterates left. In France, in most people's opinion, education is only the prelude to a salary. A rather shabby notion.

"We want a nation in which the manual worker can at least converse with the intellectual worker. If one has not the advantages of wealth, it is a great thing to have at least the joys of culture.

"Do you realise, Mr. But, that our system of National Education is applying Malthusianism to the poor in matters of instruction? No money? Then you won't go to the *lycée*. You won't even get any Secondary Education unless you have private means."

"What about scholarships?"

"Useful so long as the parents can do without their son's earnings."

"We have had Presidents of the Republic who were sons of the people. And think of all the great artists and scholars who have risen from the poorest classes! Which proves that talent succeeds."

"Which proves above all the tremendous reserve force of the people, since in spite of the unfavourable conditions imposed on the children of the working classes, some of them have managed to break through. But how many assets are lost, for lack of help at the start! A lamentable waste of potential national treasure.

"A really free education offering serious study to every child capable of benefiting by it, would be a step forward. But it is obvious that under a Capitalist régime it would still be the children of the privileged classes who would benefit most by such a reform. For, as I said before, the children of the proletariat are bound to contribute their wages at the earliest possible moment to their family, and could not therefore, except in special cases, take advantage of the higher education, even if it were free.

"We have got to recognise that our most important Ministry (with that of Economics) is the Ministry of Instruction and National Education. Everything depends on it from the outset. It is this Ministry which forms the People. Which *should* form it, that is. At the moment, it compels it to conform. And as the thing it wants to conform it to is unhealthy, it *deforms*. Further, as the régime it conforms to is doomed, it is forming minds which will be ill-adapted to the inevitable social conditions of to-morrow, consequently unhappy and useless.

"Remember that an uneducated man can only obey. The very first condition of Socialism is a culture enabling the citizen to see for himself when and why he must obey. Socialism postulates culture and consciousness.

"Here are two relevant views on the subject, the first by Stendhal, who wrote in 1822:

'The number of geniuses produced by a nation is proportionate to the number of men receiving a sufficient

education, and there is nothing to prove that my boot-maker has not the soul to write like Corneille. He has not had the education needed to develop his feelings and teach him to communicate them to the public.'

"The Conservative Renan says:

'It is not enough for the progress of the human spirit that a few heads should rise like wild oats above the common level . . . a civilisation is only strong when it has an extensive foundation.' "

"I'm not convinced. There's a little cutting I must go and look up," said Mr. But. And he went off.

Later, he came back, and read me these statistics, "for my information.":

"In France, according to the *Bulletin des examens secondaires*, 25 per cent of the engineers are out of work. In 1933 the Ministry of National Education could not cope with the requests for posts made by

640 licentiates in Philosophy		
47	„	Classics
206	„	History
305	„	Modern Languages.
<hr/>		
1,621		

"And in 1933, according to M. Joseph Barthélémy, 17 licentiates in Law were doing duty as policemen in Paris."

I answered:

"Proof, once again, that the present economic system is not compatible with a wide dissemination of culture. Draw your own conclusions."

"But do *you* realise, you who want culture and Socialism, that your Socialism would be an extinguisher of free thought?

Look what is happening in Russia, where everything, material and intellectual, is controlled."

"And what is happening in Germany? In Italy? After all, the Russian People, at one time so completely undisciplined, anarchistic and *lazy*—don't forget that—has gone ahead enormously. Even if the controlling hand has committed, is still committing, excesses, is that any reason for believing in the inevitability of that sort of control in the application of the Socialist System? The Russians are novices in Democracy. France, England, and all the little Nordic countries and United States of America, assimilated Democracy and its liberties long ago. The case is very different."

"So you believe liberty of thought will be possible under a Socialist régime?"

"Let us go into that. I am well aware that most Intellectuals fear it will be impossible. I am an Intellectual. I have therefore been obliged to consider at length all the horrors of REGIMENTED THOUGHT. I am not prepared to have my writings dictated to me. But first of all, do you suppose that a bourgeois Fascism, or the King, would leave authors free to write against the régime, as we are allowed to do in our benevolent, sometimes even too tolerant, French Democracy? Fascisms use brute force to make people pour fulsome praise on their absurd theories; and under such régimes honest men with good brains are in a very awkward position. Socialism could obviously not allow its principles to be attacked, at any rate to begin with. But it contains such truths, and such entire and positive certainties of progress, that writers, for that very reason, would be infinitely better off than under a retrogressive régime of force, which allowed them no choice but to be honest and silent, or dishonest and liars.

"I am not saying there will be no serious difficulties to overcome in that direction. Governments are apt to take the easiest way, which is to forbid and punish.

"But I do say that Socialism must on no account interfere with non-political affairs. The essential aim of the system is to co-ordinate effort on converging lines. It will have to exact

work, good work, faithful obedience to social duties, like any other régime. But once we have honestly accomplished our common duties, the State must leave us in peace.

"Socialism in France, a naturally intelligent and liberal country, will be a 'liberal' Socialism, as far as liberty of thought and belief is concerned, or it will not last.

"And would not last anywhere.¹

"There can be no question of relinquishing the most valuable conquest of Democracy—liberty of thought. We have to establish an economic system that will allow Democracy to develop widely.

"As for the Liberalism of to-day, it is too often merely the right to egotism. Too many writers have adopted the habit of saying everything that comes into their heads, for the sake of effect, without any regard to the consequences. The State should discourage these critics, who criticise from sheer levity, intellectual vice, desire for publicity; for the pleasure of attracting attention; from a sadistic love of meddling, or for the fun of a purely aesthetic game of destruction."

"How can one be sure? You are opening the door to abuse."

"Once again, I recognise the risk. I know what men are. I think like Vauvenargues, that inevitable abuses are a law of nature. I do not expect perfection of any sort in this world. But a lesser evil taking the place of a greater is after all an improvement.

"I believe that once the Revolution of Convergence has been accomplished and solidly established, a great improvement will have been set going. At the same time, fresh progress can only be obtained by free criticism of the results. Progress could not long survive, if you were to force people to mould their ideas blindly and automatically on those of their leaders. If nothing but Bravo! Heil Hitler! Eia! Eia!! Alala!!! Duce!!!! was allowed, no matter how good the intentions of the Leaders,

¹ *Note 1937.* The case of Socialism in England will be dealt with in my next book. But we may say here that actually, in 1938, in spite of the efforts of the Front Populaire, the France which seems to so many Englishmen a hotbed of Bolshevism, has not even so far caught up with the social legislation of Conservative England. But Hitler's agents are working hard in London.

nor how fruitful the doctrine that guided them, progress could not long continue its course, or even survive. It is not enough that a doctrine should be evolutionary in name and intention, there must also be innovators, free to be evolutionary in their turn, if it is to progress. Hence the necessity of allowing freedom of thought, with the above-mentioned reservations."

Robert X . . . , a professional tactician in politics, honest and reserved, interposed:

"TACTICS call for a body of homogeneous doctrine, in which all practical and intellectual questions are supposed to be solved. For Tactics are intended for the Masses, who have not, as a whole, the necessary training for useful discussion. And action and convergence, as you call them demand watch-words that must be accepted outright, without discussion."

"That is unfortunately true," said I. "It is the origin of those collective 'beliefs' which all parties declare to be necessary to-day. I have no gift for that sort of thing. But then I am not, and do not wish to be, a tactician."

The tactician replied very amiably, and more intelligently than most of his kind:

"Some people's social value consists in the fact that their sincerity may be relied on. The politician himself is necessarily a tactician. It is part of the political game. It is only too true that some of them get warped by their profession, to the extent of loving tactics for their own sake. They come to mistake the means for the end, and the nation for a game of bowls. There are pretty bad examples of this in every party."

"They must be forgiven. Craftiness in the service of ideas that one believes to be true, noble, useful, leads to habitual falsehood. That is why it seems to me essential, if only to counter-balance the inevitable excesses of the tacticians, that the honest writer should never say anything insincere. He endangers his social usefulness if he abuses the confidence of his readers. The 'pure' Intellectual is not a lawyer or a tactician, but an agent of progress by reason of his contribution of ideas, sometimes in harmony with official ideas and sometimes not. I feel quite sure that in a régime founded on really

sane and progressive reasons and feelings, those whose profession it is to have ideas—always excepting the vicious and frivolous critics—will be naturally agreed upon the fundamental basis of the system. All that they write will therefore be sufficiently in line with it, without any attempt at tactics or quibbling.

“To sum up: The reservations of an honest writer go to prove his courage. For there is often a certain danger in not repeating the lesson of the day. And hypocrisy in an author is a sin against honour, that social necessity. From society as a whole comes the theme; it is for the individual to compose fugues and variations on it. That is how progress goes. If, nevertheless, you are inclined to heterodoxy by the turn of your mind or your feelings, see to it that your heterodoxy is of a quality that will deserve some day to become orthodox.”

Mr. But, tired of saying nothing, butts in with:

“That’s all very fine, but one must first believe in PROGRESS.”

“The Press of the Right is doing its best these days to persuade us that progress does not exist. Do you know why? First of all, to cure us of any desire for change. Any change ‘forwards’ can only remove us still further from ‘The Good Old Times’. Secondly, to suggest that Reaction would take us back into the Golden Age. Rubbish, obviously. But this anaesthetic is being administered in full strength by the Doctors of the Right, in preparation for the Surgeons, the executioners of Progress.”¹

“You think people are better, and behave better and more decently than they used to?”

“As for the best of them, I can’t say. The Masses? I am certain of it. Above all, I see that people, the Peoples, are living less miserable lives, materially speaking. That is something in itself. It is an improvement. The French are not resigned or crushed by nature; their reactions are very spontaneous. Those, that is, whom neither wealth nor religion,

¹ *Note 1937-1938.* Hitler, Mussolini, Franco . . . and our Terrorists of the Right, Cagoulards and C.S.A.R.

nor both, have turned into automatons. The normal Frenchman, in fact. He believes in progress. He gets upset when progress as he conceives it breaks down. That is the deep-seated moral cause of the present troubles.

"The Frenchman believes in progress. I say the Frenchman, but really everyone who is sincere is aware of it, sees it, believes in it.

"This axis that we are after—is it not the axis shown by the compass of Progress? Is it not the eternal axis of mankind? Even when the individual acts in opposition to the needle's showing; that is, when he knows he is doing wrong—even then he is only doing so in the hope of some better thing, be it merely an unhealthy pleasure. Even the Sadists, even the flagellants, are in pursuit of the Better. The sign of the Better is merely inverted in their case. For them, suffering is desirable—a pleasure—an improvement. And suicide proves dramatically that the pursuit of the Better can lead to a violent sort of courage.

"This *notion of the Better* is a very old instrument. Yet there is little fear of its breaking down or wearing out. It is still, and always will be, the pilot of mankind; so long as the physical and biological world, and the intellectual and moral world which is bound up with it, has not turned upside down and nothing suggests that we are heading for a masquerade in which the Worse is to change places with the Better in the ideals and the hopes of men."

"But," said Mr. But, "civilisations and forms of society are perpetually changing. That must be a proof that the Good does not exist. Otherwise we should not be always running after it."

"I am not so foolish as to confuse Good with Better. For one thing, I know that the substance of the idea of Good has gone through strange variations in the course of time. I remember too how cold, abstract, pale and dusty, like Art School plaster casts, were the religious or secular notions of BETTER and GOOD which the curé or the professor inculcated in us as children. Better and Good were mixed up antagonistically

in their lectures, and ended by devouring each other. The Better, which is essentially evolutionary, lost all its meaning, for they set themselves to teach us the definite actions that must eternally constitute the Good. And as though to accentuate this stupid mistake, they interpreted the old saying '*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*' ('*Striving to better, oft we mar what's well*')—which discreetly emphasises the classical contradiction I have been pointing out—as an exhortation to dull conformity, a warning not to overdo things.

"Let us therefore consider the Good simply as an unattainable ideal, a god of dreams, and the Better as a tendency common to all human beings, or to all communities.

"In other words, the Better is a movement towards the ideal Good. And this movement is Progress. In short, Mr. But:

PROGRESS *is any change which gives us an idea and a feeling of improvement.*"

"That's rather an abstract formula," said Mr. But, "but it's not bad. Only how are we to make sure we are not on the wrong road. I mean how are we to know for certain that we are on the way to Improvement, as you call it?"

"We feel distinctly when an improvement takes place in us or in our favour. You were hungry; you have eaten; you are better. It's the same as with love—there's no need of a gauge. Intellectual discernment is a more difficult thing. Is that what you mean? Well, look here. You would call a mathematical method the better one, which demonstrated by a few signs what it took another ten pages to set out. You would be judging by efficacy, economy of means. We measure a poem, a piece of music, a machine, a picture or any other performance in much the same way—by their efficacy. Any performance is considered *better*, the more effective it is. That is, when its efficiency is not hindered by internal counterforces which we call defects.

"Translate this into moral terms, and the result is the same. It is the same with the social order. Socialism . . ."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. But, "that was not quite

what I was asking you. What I meant was, how are we to know in our own life whether our actions are good? What is our compass for that? Now that our religious guides have lost their authority, it is all very difficult. It used to be fairly easy, if not to behave well, at least to know what one had to do to be sure of Heaven or Hell."

"All I can say to that, my friend, is that I can think of no safer or finer way of living to-day, than to be guided in all things, each according to our powers, by the will to promote civilisation. And this idea is simply the sublimation of our natural tendency to progressive adaptability."

"How idealistic!" said Mr. But. "What are the wages? The strength of all religion lies, and has always lain, in their essential realism. They have always held out magnificent rewards: eternal Paradise for the good, eternal Fire for those who broke the rules.

"That was the way to drill people!

"But the social religion that you favour offers no reward to its devotees beyond the moral satisfaction of having been of use, and, very rarely, the dividend of some improvement brought about, generally a very small one compared with the expenditure of effort. All this demands a disinterestedness which has few attractions to offer. Are you really counting on the disinterestedness of mankind? All great deeds have always been accomplished through the egoism of a few, or of the mass. Can you deny it?"

"I believe there have been men, that there are many living now, for whom the gratuitousness of their task is the most stimulating thing about it. It is their form of interest—with all deference to you, who consider an immediate dividend, or else the stripes and decorations of the Angelic Host, an indispensable lure if things are to 'work'. There are plenty of laymen who look forward to no terrestrial or celestial reward, but work simply for the happiness of serving mankind. I admire them. To do what they think right, they are often obliged to oppose the will of society or of those they are trying to help. They are saints in soft hats or cloth caps.

"You have only to keep in touch with what is going on to-day, to realise that any number of young people—self-avowed materialists, and firmly convinced that man comes to an end with death—are yet living enthusiastically because they know they are contributing towards a civilisation whose design, as yet barely sketched out, has fired their youthful imagination. And though all Socialists may not be animated by the same enthusiastic and disinterested faith, we can honestly say that a part of mankind now finds in a certain notion of civilisation a substitute for the old religious disciplines which allotted posthumous rewards and penalties for our deeds. Theirs is a noble enthusiasm, for many of them know they will never receive any benefit from their labours. They will merely die in harness, in the service of others, and of the future."

Mr. But: "They are working for *a* civilisation, you say? I thought you stood for *universal* civilisation?"

"The idea that they are working, along new lines, at a universal civilisation, is just what gives such impetus to the Socialists. Moscow is making a paradoxical use of the intention of Imperial Rome, of the Vatican, of the thinkers of the Middle Ages, both monks and laymen, of the Encyclopaedists and of the French Revolution, of the scientists and even the great ecclesiastics of every century. That is, to work for the Universal. For the general before the particular, the eternal and the constant before the temporary and accidental, for society before the individual, humanity before the nation.

"There are programmes less traditional—in spite of their boast of keeping up tradition—especially at the present time, when economic autonomies are giving birth to intellectual autarchies. Germany looks upon herself as exclusively Germanic and is even attempting to set up a religious autarchy: the Germanic-Christian Church—which is the last straw.¹

"There are no doubt special destinies, therefore special truths for each one of us, for every country, every age, each sex, each nation. But does not your reason tell you, *Mr. But*,

¹ *Note 1937.* The struggle between Hitler and the Churches is in full swing.

that the most precious truths, those that deserve our sacrifice are those which are true for the two billion human beings inhabiting this Earth? Do not your feelings tell you, at the same time, that these truths are moving, glowing, really sublime, when they are truths for all time? There are not many of them, but they exist."

"Yes," said Mr. But.

"Yet to-day, even in France, the notion of the Universal is in great disfavour with all the parties of the Right. It is considered almost seditious. Those who defend it are given bad marks, and pigeon-holed to be sent to prison or shot as traitors. When these fools come into power, the fate of intelligence and progress will be sealed. To the idea of the Universal these Parties oppose 'essentially French' truths—copied from 'essentially German' or 'essentially Italian' ideas—in the fond hope of thus preserving the innate genius, the 'Tradition' of France. But these Nationalist ideas are a glaring break with our real tradition—the Franco-Roman, Carolingian, Catholic, Royal, Republican; the tradition of Ancient Rome, our tradition, which has always been on the side of the Universal and of progress.

"Progress will assert itself in spite of everything. It may put up for a long while with the old social or ideological buildings erected by former ages. But there comes a day when the general conditions of life are so changed that it can no longer be adapted to the ancient formulas. Then there is a tussle, and custom puts up a tough defence. We have come to that now in France. These are wasted times, when nothing great can be accomplished, since all the forces of progress are exhausted in the struggle with those that are trying to arrest it. Some day there will have to be a drastic revolution to overthrow them.

"It is the reactionaries who bring about these crises, by hindering the necessary evolution. Revolutions are the work of the reactionaries far more than of the revolutionaries, who would not exist if it were not for the reactionaries. They *could* not exist. Reaction, if it gets the upper hand, must one

day or another end in civil war, which is the revolt of repressed evolutive forces. A thing we are threatened with now."

"How pleasant!" said Mr. But.

Silence.

He was comfortably ensconced in the famous 14 francs 50 deck-chair, bought in that critical summer of 1932 to rest my weary carcase. All those musings had somewhat strained it. A violent ripping sound broke the silence. The canvas had given way, and split beneath Mr. But's behind. He slid to the ground in a heap, then leapt up as though from a catapult. Landing awkwardly on his right foot, he made a risky attempt to recover his balance by leaning over to the left, oscillated a moment, and then, to save his dignity, turned this grotesque struggle with the forces of gravity into a jerky run. Marking time, he cried "Left!" as he put down his left foot, and "Right!" as he put down the right.

Finally he stopped, his right foot in the air, and after a pause exclaimed:

"Left! Left!! Left!!!"

And he hopped on his left foot, with his hand on his heart.

I smiled to myself. It was his Road to Damascus.

The fact was, I had slowly, gradually convinced my friend. And the little drama of the deck-chair had surprised him into the confession that he had put off from day to day, partly out of shyness, partly to tease me. I shook hands with him, and then, to save the occasion from a solemnity that would have embarrassed my highly-strung friend, I turned away, took the chalk, and on the blackboard where I do my compositions, drew this parallel:

RIGHT

Pessimism

Regressive

Believe, or pretend to believe, man is wicked.

Consider war inevitable, useful.

Pour flattery on the military hero, and the "dictator".

LEFT

Optimism

Progressive

Believe in the perfectibility, if not of the species, at least of social man.

Consider war deadly, and avoidable by Socialism, which would render it useless.

Honour the civilian hero.

Pessimism—*contd.*

The atheists of the Right support religion as a means of subjugating the People.

Traditionalists of a false tradition: Conservatism of the past, and discipleship of Machiavelli.

Pragmatists. Smile at the idea of progress.

Believe in the rights of the masters.

Consider that the end justifies the means.

Optimism—*contd.*

The atheists of the Left concede to man the right to believe what he cannot believe. Are anti-clerical in order to prevent the temporal dictatorship of the clergy.

Tradition of progressist evolution. Desire to govern by reason and justice.

Believe in progress.

Believe in the common social duties of all.

Believe in the existence of equitable means to any end worthy of civilisation.

etc.

N.B. Those who accept the general outline of these ideas, but consider themselves of the Right, are really of the Left. But if they do not accept our means for carrying these ideas into effect, they are Utopians . . . of the Right.

THE TOP FLOOR

NEW YEAR'S EVE 1934

MY MORALE AND my health had by degrees greatly improved, thanks to these solitary musings, and discussions with my friends. I had been almost daily occupied with political interests, in contact with that section of our People which has adopted civilisation as an ideal, to the honour of our country; I felt I was doing my duty to the best of my ability. I could now rise a little above the realities of the immediate present.

So that evening, waiting to see the New Year in, *tête à tête* with old But, we took our bearings. I had by now educated him sufficiently to attempt to lead him into the upper rooms of the intellectual building, to the storey where Parties are not political coteries (though it appears there is now a Hitlerian Science).

From these lighthouse rooms the view is soon lost in the mist, so we had better turn our eyes towards the inner places of our minds.

"Not an easy thing to do!" said Mr. But, squinting horribly.

"Certainly not! It was merely a figure of speech, anyway. I wanted to make you feel that an effort is necessary to break down in our bodies and our senses the habit of taking a hand in everything we do. Our senses are only accustomed to perceive what is near at hand. To reach those disinterested regions—as disinterested as is humanly possible—to which I am inviting you, we must discard the slow methods of our senses. We have often made use of the words feeling, belief, conviction, without always going deep enough into their meaning. We were on the practical plane. It is high time we examined them if we are to steer our way fairly intelligently among the problems of liberty, materialism, idealism that I want to debate with you.

“Let us first lay down these four hypotheses, as foundation stones on which to erect our ethical system; which of course is designed to serve as a basis for our practical life:

1. Desire is the axis of every concerted human action.
2. Desire is a trend towards improvement.
3. The preliminary conviction that an improvement can be attained is the motive of every deliberate action.
4. Deliberation leads to action when judgment and feeling are agreed that an improvement can be attained by means of that action. We might represent this idea by an almost algebraic equation: $\text{CONVICTION} = \text{KNOWING} + \text{FEELING}$.

“DESIRE. When do we act with gusto, energy, élan? When we are attempting to realise a desire. This seems to me, in brief, the mainspring of our behaviour. Man would not move a finger if he had no desires. Everything goes to show that nature has endowed us with desires: love, hunger, the wish for glory, all our Desires and LOVES, that we may first preserve our life, and so be enabled to fulfil our mission as human beings.”

“Our mission?”

“That sounds a bit vague, I agree. We will clear that up another day. For the moment let us hang on to the idea that nature appears to have endowed man with love so that he may preserve nature while preserving himself.”

“And you boasted that you were going to remain a ‘clerk’ on this holy Eve!” exclaimed Mr. But.

“I’m sorry. I couldn’t help it. Or rather, I’m not sorry. I’m sick to death of those idiots. Denying progress, they deny the natural tendency of man to keep himself and all that he controls in a state of evolution. Possibly our senses, when they are aware of an improvement, our reason, when it tells of an improvement, our emotions, when they register an improvement, are all merely transposing this instinct of evolution, abstractly or sensibly, according to their particular keyboards. A perfect instance of beautiful convergence. . . .”

“Of beautiful Unity!”

“Of beautiful Unity, as you say. This human unity is based on an instinct, deriving its force and beauty from that single force which creates and evolves atoms and worlds and beings. A force becomes instinct in us, and the final arbitrator of the physical and moral happiness of men and communities. I admire and love this instinct which has transformed man, and through him the earth, and to-morrow may transform the planets. I admire this humble instinct of improvement. Though why ‘humble’? What is there about it that is humble? It is Imperial in its relation to man and all that depends on man.

“Instinct, heart, mind, three in one, all brought into harmony by this one instinct. That is the way with great truths; they go in threes, for the laws of man are ternary. The three unitary truths keep step, arm-in-arm: instinct, sentiment and pure intelligence. That pleases me. It is complete and pure.”

“That is a word,” said Mr. But, “that you are fond of using. I don’t remember having heard you define it clearly.”

“Purity, like every other ideal, is absolutely impossible to grasp. Purity is never more than a trend, since perfection is not of this earth—nor of heaven.

“I can only give you the sensation of purity in answer to your question. Come with me to my laboratory.”

We went down to the garage, where he ensconced himself in a corner.

“Look at this great potato-sack, made of coarse hessian, rough and dirty. Read the label on it: CRUDE HYPO: SODA. I buy it fairly cheaply by the hundredweight. It’s good enough; at least not too bad for my purpose. When it’s dissolved it makes the water pretty dirty. There are all sorts of things in it, even bits of straw. I filter it, and it suits me all right. But it’s a very common, impure product; literally very crude. Now look at all those little bottles carefully ranged on the shelves:

Hyposulphite of Soda
PURE

"PURE glitters in the gloom of the laboratory. It is no longer a lab., but the Temple of Purity.

"PURE! That sounds fine beside your vulgar name, poor crude Hypo. The contemptuous chemist has even shortened your name, and stuck 'soda' on a vulgar label hung round your neck by a coarse bit of string. That's all you get. That's all his chemist's heart will allow you. But he ennobles the pure product with the fine Latin name of sodium, and adds its coat of arms—the cabbalistic $S_2 O_3 Na_3$ —written in a beautiful, careful Gothic hand on a fine gilt-edged, gummed label, stuck on perfectly straight. After all, how could he cram into a single formula all the muck that you contain, rich in too many impurities as you are?

"Take hold of that bottle, Mr. But. It's almost a pure idea. It's Mozart, Valéry, Lohengrin, Jesus, Spinoza.

"See how unexpectedly sentiment crops up? The chemist has an ardent affection for his radium. He looks on it with eyes of love; he adores it like a sacred wafer. And he tramples his pitchblende underfoot. . . ."

"He knows the cost in wealth and work of a milligramme of radium."

"No doubt, my wise friend. We too are careful of expensive products, because of their cost. That is part of the economic order of things. But money, for us, is never anything but the sign of work accomplished (or ought never to be anything else). So it is not merely for that reason that the chemist, the photographer, or you and I, look upon these few grammes of hyposulphite as something aristocratic. They are tasteless, hardly even dangerous, and not expensive; yet you and the chemist hold the bottle containing them with the tips of your fingers, very carefully and gingerly, like a work of art, like some good, pure deed."

Mr. But shook his head, as though unconvinced. So I went on:

"Even that ethereal angel, the pure mathematician, cannot entirely avoid sentiment. I gave you this example before: In mathematics there are various ways of demonstrating a

theorem, all equally conclusive. Some of them appear clumsy, others delight us by their brevity or their ingenuity. The mathematician calls these 'elegant', and smiles like an enraptured lover as he pursues them in thought.

"Now whence all this discrimination, if it is not prompted by FEELING? Intellectual, aesthetic feeling, if you like, but feeling none the less. I challenge you to find any other rational explanation of these criteria of value.

"All this suggests that feelings are very important factors, the value of which reason itself must beware of denying. The scientist dubs feeling's affectivity, and with that they belong to his camp. Special, out-of-the-ordinary terms often camouflage a trick of legerdemain. We may wink at it. Science cannot escape sentiment. Who can?

"We think of these pure products, the Nobility among substances, these pure demonstrations belonging to the Peerage of proofs, as though they were *pure-blooded, thoroughbred*. A sort of racism, in fact. Racism is a sentiment. A power derived from the *motive-idea* of purity. You see how useful it is to consider ideas on more than one plane. The other day when we were demonstrating the inner absurdity of the doctrine of pure blood, we did well not to deny its active power, its dangerous efficacy.

"*Efficacy of feeling and belief*. Every premeditated act is born of faith in the efficacy of the act; belief, that is, in a possible improvement. Even an act performed, consciously, from entirely selfish motives, and with the greatest contempt for conventional morality, proves belief in the moral code one is transgressing. That makes two beliefs: in the existence of the moral code, and in the improvement to be obtained by transgressing it.

"There is no certainty without belief. CERTAINTY, CONVICTION, exist at the moment when reason, instinct and feeling have all three nodded assent.

"I said once that the true lies in the feeling of the true, and not merely in the notion constructed by the mind; and that believing is a sensation of the absolute. Knowing is

believing, but believing with the mind is not enough. We must believe with the whole of our being. To believe implicitly, we must *feel* that we know.¹

"For instance, Mr. But, my mind believes in DETERMINISM. But I do not *feel* it. There are days when, because I yearn for the absolute, the thrilling relentlessness of integral Determinism goes to my head. I admire, I almost adore the prodigious machinery of a world entirely pre-determined. Consider the stupendous spectacle of this inconceivably huge machine, working with an ideal, fatal precision, beside which the most 'perfect' chronometer is mere gimcrackery. Or worse, for there is really no common factor between the perfect and the imperfect.

"How beautiful is perfect Determinism! How thrilling to the mind! I am proud to be part of that miraculous perfection!"

"You're a sentimentalist!" cried Mr. But.

"Of course! I've been telling you so till I'm blue in the face. But so are you, as I've proved to you. We are all alike. Let me go on. As I was saying, at one moment I am intoxicated, mind, body and heart, with this poem—the relentless, dematerialised theories of the out-and-out materialists. And the next moment I'm singing a different tune; because although my mind enjoys this magnificent abstract construction, my feelings are soon protesting against it, and whispering that it is not true.

"Complete conviction demands that our ideas and feelings shall be in simultaneous agreement. Feeling and knowing are the two hemispheres of truth. And faced by integral Determinism my feelings won't have it.

"Though my reason can easily and willingly admit the idea of our completely pre-determined condition, I feel, imperatively, that we possess a certain freedom. This intuition may be an illusion. But we cannot even be sure of that, since

¹ *Note 1937.* Paul Valéry says in the *N.R.F.* for February 1937: "Knowing consists to a great extent in 'thinking we know'." And André Wurmser, in connection with the trials in Moscow, writes to Gehenno: "You KNOW they are guilty, but you don't—believe it."

we cannot free ourselves from our human state. It may well be that our feelings are in the right as against our reason, and that we are free!

"More or less. (This is not evading the issue, as I shall show you.) But how could we do anything with enthusiasm if we had always to consider ourselves mere automaton? If I am no better than a mere ball, I may as well let myself be shot into the hole. I must have room to believe that our actions are to some extent free. To what extent, I can never hope to know. I don't ask to be allowed to measure certainties, but only to be sure of trends and probabilities. I am even prepared to be satisfied, for want of something better, with possibilities that will help me to act and behave."

"Live and let live! It's much simpler. It's Christmas-time. Don't think about the insoluble, it will give you wrinkles. Don't worry; it will give you a headache. You look sallow, as it is; whereas I who don't worry have a rosy complexion. (As a matter of fact I look healthier than he does.) It is better to believe that there is nothing to understand."

"There you go, my friend! Believe? I am as capable of belief as anyone else. But I don't think it necessary to believe more than I need. I have no great fondness for theories that are demoralising, or even merely displeasing. What obliges me to choose them? Nothing. Neither my mind nor my heart. Besides, it doesn't follow that because everything is not always for the best, so far as we are concerned, it is necessarily for the worst.

"To begin with, we ought never to believe too much in what we believe. That would be a voluntary limitation of our progress. In the present case it would be affirming two truths at once—presumptuously—if we were to declare, like so many poor wretches and powerful scientists, that everything is ordained, and that there is nothing to understand. Besides, believing that everything is ordained and that there is nothing to understand, is still believing. I have always wanted to understand. This has sometimes prevented me from understanding what others understood without difficulty. For instance

when I was a child, I used to ask my new mathematics master, at the beginning of each school year, always with the hope of an answer to this bee in my bonnet:

“Please sir, *why* do two and two make four?’

“The professor was always very much annoyed by the question. He would give me a dirty look, thinking I was cheeking him, and would punish me. Or else he would shrug his shoulders, smile pityingly, turning up the whites of his eyes, and think or bellow:

“‘What an idiot the boy is!’

“After that he would leave me alone, in my seat at the back of the class, where I could daydream the whole year round, drawing plans of pneumatic submarines, or looking at plants and infusoria under a pocket microscope I had bought at the fair. And periodically demanding why two and two made four.

“Impositions have not cured me. In fact I think I have got worse. Between you and me, Mr. But, can we be really certain that there exist two unities, in the whole world, strictly, physically identical, really entitled to be called equal?

“We can’t, can we? For one thing, how can we get accurate proof of it? Impossible. None of our instruments are above suspicion. We can never obtain more than approximate measurements, ‘ultimately converging’, no doubt, but by the yardstick of perfection, *false*.

“There is a good deal of ideality about mathematics.

“The curious thing is that nature often seems to conform to them fairly comfortably. (Fairly, no more.) Perhaps that is because we are easily satisfied.”

“In practice . . .”

“Don’t interrupt, Mr. But, or you will have no progress among your presents to-morrow morning.

“You smile? All right, smile. All the same I intend to make you admit— Do leave off looking at your watch every thirty seconds. It won’t be time to see the New Year in for another three hours and forty-eight minutes— In the meantime I hope to prove to you that these abstract discussions can afford, not merely intellectual pleasure, but really useful results for

our daily life, by soothing to some extent a certain intellectual distress which does us more harm than we think. I hope this conversation may produce some notions with which to temper the pessimism in which we are plunged at times by the idea that we are leading entirely pre-determined lives.

"I was saying that the most delicate instruments of measurement are inaccurate, and no doubt always will be so¹. (That is why either the seller or the buyer is always cheated.) For the same reason it is absolutely impossible to know whether there are material realities in nature entirely corresponding to our abstract notions of total perfection. It would have to be proved, and we have no reliable means of doing so. It is rather a good thing we haven't. If we could discover a single perfect material embodiment of a notion implying perfection—two absolutely equal weights, for instance—in the degree of perfection represented by the ideal symbols: $A = B$ or $2 + 2 = 4$ —we should have reaped two agreeable benefits by the way, but they would have excluded the one I am trying to seize at this moment. These two alluring benefits would have been: *Perfection is of this world*; and: *The mind is homogeneous with the working of the universe*. But we should thereby have lost a serious probability of freedom. For if nature were capable of accomplishing any *perfection*, it would not be fundamentally impossible for her to accomplish the perfection of complete Determinism. Fortunately the same reasons which prevent us from discovering experimentally whether perfection according to human notions, exists in nature, prevent us from proving that Determinism is complete. So we are free to suppose it is not.

"Nature seems, as a matter of fact, to be content with the approximate. Take an example from technical experience. An instrument of precision pleases us because, of all human constructions, it most nearly approaches perfection. And yet our brief industrial experience is already leading us to introduce

¹ Note 1937. Research into the Quanta suggests that on the atomic scale, in every experiment of comparative measurement, the experimenter unavoidably induces a certain perturbation in one of the two objects under consideration, which falsifies the result.

greater play into our machines. Elastic couplings are being adopted. Springs, or films of very unctuous oil, are placed between the parts. These elasticities and fluidities render the machine less fragile and more effective—no doubt because more in conformity with the behaviour of matter. For machines became natural objects through the agency of man. You will notice that, wherever possible, they are now provided with washers of rubber, which has the properties of colloidal substances—structures in which the freedom of the molecules is great—or else with pneumatic bladders full of air, in which the freedom of the elements is yet greater. These are taking the place of the old-fashioned rigid metal springs. These natural springs are far more delicate than those of our making—no doubt because they are more obedient to nature's demands for liberty. This alone throws light on what I mean, and there is a lot more to be said on the subject, but midnight would be striking before I had done. A machine, I repeat, becomes, through the agency of man, a natural object, subject to the same forces as the rest of the world. And it demands liberty! Thus the science of mechanics gives us a useful insight into the behaviour of the universe, on which we can have no direct action, no means of spying. Nature demands elasticity, elbow-room. For instance, when a calculator wishes to apply to reality a formula symbolising or anticipating a phenomenon, he is obliged to introduce into this formula a margin of uncertainty. A sort of spring, that is, to allow for imperfection. This factor may be considered as a symbol of the material *play* needed by nature, whereas absolute Determinism allows for none.

“Conclusion: If Determinism ‘worked’ without ‘play’, what a sensational, incredible departure that would be from the general behaviour of material reality!

“Everything tends to convince us, you see, that there is no perfection in this world, except in our minds. Perfection is the unreal model towards which man appears to be striving with all the passion of that enduring impetus: Progress.

“So let us bury Absolute Determinism this evening, and

save Determinism, a proud and courageous idea. Let us give it elasticity, as slight as you please. Let us leave room for a modest washer, which will make the formula of Determinism 'fit' the facts. This little crack in the huge equation of the universe is perhaps nothing less than the sign of LIBERTY.¹

"And into this tiny crack I cram the Will. I must get it in somewhere, for I feel that Will is a great force, exerting a great influence over our lives. I am so sensible of its power that I believe in it. But I don't believe much in CHANCE. As for luck, it is surely no more than opportunities seized and exploited piping hot, energetically, with a cunning and powerful will. Without this will you will never have any luck. Or

¹ *Note 1935.* These thoughts on Determinism might seem like idle speculation. But I have just been lent *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans, in which he says:

"Professor Heisenberg has shown that the concepts of the modern quantum theory involve what he calls a 'principle of indeterminacy' . . . Heisenberg . . . makes it appear that nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things. . . . The future may not be unalterably determined by the past as we used to think. . . .

"Einstein showed in 1917 that the theory founded by Planck appeared . . . to dethrone the law of causation . . . Nature permits a certain 'margin of error'. . . . the fact that 'loose-jointedness' . . . pervades the whole universe destroys the case for absolutely strict causation. . . . Probably the majority of physicists expect that in some way the law of strict causation will in the end be restored to its old place in the natural world. So far it has not been restored, with the result that, up to the present at least, the picture of the universe presented by the new physics contains more room than did the old mechanised picture for life and consciousness to exist within the picture itself, together with the attributes which we commonly associate with them, such as free-will, and the capacity to make the universe in some small degree different by our presence. . . .

"To-day science can no longer shut the door on this possibility; she has no longer any unanswerable arguments to bring against our innate conviction of free-will."

I was glad to come across these passages, containing some of the very terms I had employed. By their different methods, mathematicians and physicists arrive at the same conclusions as an empiricist. Which shows that induction, analysis and logic sometimes march abreast with feeling, and may reach the same goal. Also that when all hope appears lost, sometimes, by some unexpected accident, hope may revive. This is the saving of the species—which can only be saved by hope and a certain sense of being independent of fate. Provisional conclusions, of course, but better than nothing.

It seems that the churchmen have seized on these discoveries. They have a perfect right to do so. What does it matter if people are foolish enough to believe that God can be proved to exist, scientifically even? I shall state later on what my views are on the subject of God.

Note 1937. Read *La Physique Nouvelle et les Quanta*, by Louis de Broglie. Paris 1937.

rather, I believe the only real, fundamental luck consists in having will-power and knowing how to use it. It should therefore be perpetually exercised. If the fairies have been sparing of this gift to you, exercise it constantly, to get the maximum output from it."

"What about BAD LUCK then?" asked Mr. But. "Do you deny its existence?"

"It undoubtedly exists. As an example, I once saw in a glass jar, in the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco, a fabulous little creature from the uttermost depths of the sea, almost as strange to look at as a man. One day, it was pursuing its usual humble alimentary and transformative tasks—a little cosmic contributor, doing no harm to anyone save the creatures that were smaller than its orifice—drinking in salt water by one hole, spitting it out by another; drinking, spitting, drinking, spitting incessantly, stirring up a little cloud of muddy water around itself. But that day, at a certain hour, there came slowly, almost solemnly dropping down, at the end of a steel cable, the Prince of Monaco's deep-sea trap. Right on top of the creature, centred to a hair's breadth by Chance. Well, really! In the deepest depths of the waters, so far away, so much off the beaten track that never perhaps since the birth of the oceans had a ship passed over the spot where the little creature was lying. It might really have thought itself safe from the traffic. What bad luck! As it came up into the daylight, what a queer face it must have made! Did it strike up a 'Hymn to the Sun' before expiring in the sunlight? Perhaps it meditated on the subject of fate and free-will.

"The end of this prodigiously unlucky creature stirs me to the depths. My optimism suddenly dons an armlet of crape."¹

¹ *Note 1937.* We may resume our optimism:

" . . . A young soldier was brought back from the Front, near Madrid, with a wounded shoulder. To the doctors' questions he replied that he had a live shell embedded in his shoulder, which had not exploded.

"'You surely don't mean to tell us the shell is intact inside your shoulder?' they said.

"'I do!' he persisted. 'And take care it doesn't explode when you take it out.'

"The doctors probed the wound and examined the shoulder. Under their

Said Mr. But with a sly smile:

"If truth were told, you're a tremendous optimist!"

"Or shall we say, a pessimist in search of reasons for optimism? If one was determined to be optimistic at all costs, one might say that the Monaco fish shares the posthumous glory of the artist, the writer, the thinker, the scientist, the reformer. The dream of all those who desire to render exceptional service, and set an example by their works. People stop in front of the glass coffin of that poor ridiculous fish, like the crowds before the shrine of Saint Theresa in wax at Lisieux, and the glazed tomb of Lenin in the Kremlin. . . . With the sole difference—an important one—that Lenin deserved his luck."

"Granted. But without luck, would his merit have been rewarded?"

"Shall we thrash that out too? We can never know for certain how things would have happened if they hadn't happened as they did. Just as one can never know whether the patient wouldn't have recovered without the doctor's treatment. That is one of the queer things about the profession, and one of the reasons why doctors make fortunes.

"Insoluble problems, such as Determinism and Chance, have [by their very nature an advantage over all others. They are an eternal subject for the fencing-bouts of every generation, giving rise to the invention of ever new strokes of the rapier,

fingers they could feel the contour of the projectile, which certainly appeared to be intact and armed with its cap.

"The surgeon enlarged the wound so as to expose the whole of the shell. When the shoulder-blade was laid bare, they saw they would be obliged, as the wounded man had said, first of all to make the shell harmless. They sent for a lieutenant of artillery, who unscrewed the dangerous cap with the utmost precaution. After which the artilleryman made way for the surgeon, who removed the missile from the body" (*Paris-Soir*, 5th Sept., 1937).

The lucky dog had *assisted* his luck by his persistence with the doctors. Another man might have *tempted* his luck by trusting it to the end. It would probably have served him very badly. It is risky to play the David:

"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

It should never be forgotten that David was a champion slinger. Even if luck exists, one benefits most by it if one does not believe in it overmuch.

and automatically providing materials for the history of the mind and its errors."

"Anyway," said Mr. But, "the conclusion to be drawn from all this seems clear. If we have the choice between several notions offering as many certainties—or uncertainties—we should be very foolish to choose a notion that weakens us, rather than one that helps us to live and act."

"That's just what I mean. In such cases, let feeling decide. It is feeling, in any case, which chooses between equally uncertain solutions of insoluble problems."

"Wouldn't it be better not to try and solve them?"

"Harking back to that again! Well, you just try it! As though one did it on purpose! It's just because they are insoluble that they come back and back like ravenous beasts. They are passionately absorbing questions. Can we elude them? Pretend to ignore them? Thrust them away from us? It would be very dangerous.¹ It is just as dangerous to thwart the mind as the feelings. We had better retain both their portfolios in our Ministry, otherwise their forces would foment the sort of plots in the depths of our unconscious that send people to the padded cell. Of the two Ministers, the less dangerous is perhaps the Mind. It is prepared to give in quite nicely, as fairly common instances will show. But there is something in us that will not give in; and it is the distress of this mute and secret questioner that must be soothed. Let us attend to it. The doctor's presence can cheer the heart of the dying man, even if the poor creature has little faith in the interest taken in him. Sometimes it may actually cure him. If we keep our condemned questions company, it will soothe *us*.

"Besides, when setting oneself unanswerable questions, one often comes across answerable ones. And that's something to the good."

"What are you playing at now?"

"I am not playing. Or rather, what do you mean? Play has a good many meanings, possibly all of them only different

¹ *Art*, p. 178.

aspects of the same common natural tendency. Play of machinery, play of the mind, play upon words, sword play, playing for stakes, and goodness knows what. But I'm not playing in the sense you mean. I'm playing, not for love of the game, but in the attempt to win. Putting all my thought-cards on the table, I select one with my 'heart' on it.

"If, when the time comes for action, I try to find more than one solution, it is for the sake of offering a choice to my intuition, which knows its deepest needs better than I do, and will pitch on the solution it prefers. Properly organised people pitch instinctively on the right thing. I am sorry for those whose natural faculties cannot decide for them, and for those whose miserly mind offers them only one solution, decked in the deceptive colours of truth, but involving many a risk, as statistics will prove, of embarrassing or ruining them. Scepticism has the advantage of offering several solutions to choose from. Vauvenargues said:

"Reason deceives us more often than nature."

"Well! I'm damned! . . ."

Sergius was becoming rather familiar. The champagne had something to do with it, of course. But one of the best ways of making people familiar with you is to pretend to believe in nothing. Which shows that we all feel respect for believers, and a certain natural contempt for those who "believe in nothing". Try telling a professional materialist, who prides himself on believing in nothing, that you don't *believe* in materialism, and see what he says.

"Are you a sceptic, then?" asked Mr. But.

"Of course not! But one must distinguish to some extent between one's convictions—for modesty's sake, and for the sake of the most elementary intellectual honesty. And here is one of those strange examples of the dualism of our beings: What we know for certain to be doubtful is what we believe in most absolutely. In practice, fortunately, we don't bother so much; we lean securely on these fragile convictions, as

boldly as the legendary heroes, as Roland on his Durandal. We may even go to our death for the idea of liberty."

"*Vive la liberté!*" cried Mr. But.

"Don't get excited, Mr. But. Let me tell you the dream I had last night. Marthe and I had had a long talk, at dinner-time, about the relativity of everything, especially of liberty, every kind of liberty. In my dream I had a little dog, quite a tiny one. So that he shouldn't feel miserable at being tied up, I had bought him a lead 200 yards long, that would allow him to go from my house to the Parc Montsouris, about 200 yards away. The lead was made of very fine cord, light but very resistant, like a fishing-line, and not at all distressing to the dear little beast. So my dog enjoyed almost complete liberty. As soon as I opened the door he ran off, paying his usual respects to everything on his way. Soon he was frolicking about by the Park. He was so far off that he looked hardly bigger than a rat. I waited for him on the doorstep, and when I thought the recreation interval had lasted long enough, I pulled at the cord to let him know it. I felt a lively resistance. The animal stiffened and dug its claws into the ground. In spite of my respect for other people's liberty, I was not prepared to give in to a little dog. It would have been an encroachment on my own liberty. I pulled. And as he put up a tremendous resistance, I had to haul the rebel in. The string coiled up at my feet. When the beast drew nearer, I saw it was not my dog at all, but a young lion.

"LIBERTY: So long as we don't drag at the chain. The bond is only noticeable when we try to lengthen or break it. So long as we let the co-ordinate which binds us to necessity drift loosely, we do not feel it; we are under the delusion that we are free. The notion of liberty is like every other notion; it is mainly a matter of feeling. If we are deprived of this feeling we suffer. It is one of our primary needs.

"As masters, therefore, we should realise that our subordinates have the same needs as ourselves. And that it is a good thing not to let them feel the drag of that delegate of natural forces, the Boss's hand, too much. The statesman

should see to it that the laws he makes are not so rigid as to break the necks of those who must obey them, since that would be to deprive the community, by force, of all who are not born slaves. But it is advisable that the leaders, the legislators, who regulate the length of the chains, should now and then (but only now and then) let the precise extent of those chains be felt, so that all may learn to know them, and keep naturally within their rights. This would save us from the disagreeable sensation of being tied. As individuals, aware of our dependence on the universe, it is madness to try and break our leads every day; but it is wise to test them from time to time, so as not to let ourselves be deceived by a false notion of our liberty. We should learn its extent, and end by making that extent one of our intuitions. The fish in the new aquarium begins by bashing its nose against the glass, but it soon integrates the dimensions of its liberty. It is the same with us, for by means of this unconscious obedience we obtain one of our sweetest and therefore most useful illusions.

“If social liberty is the right to do anything that hurts no one else, our duty to ourselves must be to do nothing that will harm *us*. We should therefore do nothing to make the feeling of servitude weigh heavy on us, since that would diminish us in our own eyes.

“Let us train ourselves to sense what our body, mind and heart are asking for. Let us try to keep them from desiring anything that will stir up the superior forces of nature against us, for they can break us mercilessly.

“In my youth I was something of an anarchist, of course. I rebelled against everything. Even against sleep, which kept interrupting my work. I tried to get round it by sitting up all night; and next day I was a wreck. In painting I did ‘the opposite’, on purpose. I was forced in the end to recognise that certain obligations come from something higher than ourselves. I had labelled everything convention. It was my notion that was conventional, because it denied the existence of necessities that were not conventional at all. At last I came

to see that though much may be convention, we are unavoidably dependent on certain things, and my progress dates from the moment when I recognised this dependence and obeyed it. Then it helped me; for that is how one passes freely from anarchy to constructive order.

"I set myself to define as many as possible of these obligations. For the better we know them, the easier it is to obey them. And the freer we feel in consequence.

"Moreover when one has a certain degree of culture, the sense of guilt is a form of slavery. Feeling that one is disobeying the will of higher powers places one, so to speak, in a state of sin. But yielding to them produces a sensation of harmony with the universe and the community, which makes for happiness. Beauty itself is only the music of satisfied necessities.

"We must not rub the forces of the universe the wrong way. I knew a woman in revolt against all the powers—of nature, of society, even of love. One day her lover reproached her for letting her head swarm with little animals. It cramped his style, he said. She replied that the lice were free, and so was she; and if he didn't like it, he was free to leave her.

"He made ready to go; but it was she who went.

"And before doing so, to prove her freedom, she smashed everything. Two chairs, the crockery, the clock. Then she ran out and slammed the door. She trampled the begonias underfoot, threw the flower-pots through the window, boxed the ears of a little boy who was just piddling freely under the *Commit No Nuisance* notice she had had painted up on the wall, and gave a kick in the belly to the good old nanny-goat, whose astonished eyes seemed inquiring:

"'What's come over you?'

"She yelled at the top of her voice:

"'I want to be free! I want to be free!'

"Then she wrote to the Commissary of Police to have this inscription placed on her tombstone:

"'Here lies a free woman.'

"And to convince herself of her freedom for the last time,

she drowned herself. Let us shed a tear for the pretty pet, who sacrificed herself for liberty.

"She was freer than God, anyway, for He is not free to resign."

"O Liberty!" quoth Mr. But, originally, "What crimes are committed in thy name!"

This hardly called for comment; so I thought I would try out my notions of LAW on him. I began declaiming:

"*If there is such a thing as a superior man, it is he who has been bred in the School of Necessity.*" Thus spake, according to Thucydides, Archidamos, King of the Lacedaemonians. Which may be interpreted: Who knows Necessity, knows the Law.

"The dispensation to come—and it is coming inevitably, we have seen why—will have to repress Anarchy at all costs. It is a good thing to accustom ourselves to submit to the Law, to acclimatise our minds, that were formed in the Libertarian days before the War. One must love the Law if one is to submit to it with ease."

"How can you, who have fought for every sort of liberty, accept, and even hope for, a régime with severe laws?"

"I have fought, I am fighting to-day, and shall continue to do so, against false laws and barren regulations. But I am not an anarchist. I think I have even demonstrated in the course of my writing and teaching the impotence of certain laws. For the real laws are always, in every domain, prescribed for us by the Forces of Nature. Let us begin by the definition of a necessary law, taking care not to confuse it with mere rules:

"Law belongs to the universal and the eternal. Rules belong to the temporal and particular."

"Let us take two drawers:

"Into the first we will put the laws, which reappear in each successive civilisation because they define, in the shape of edicts of different kinds, the unavoidable necessities upon which all possibility of communal life depends. In no matter what form of community. The prohibition of murder, for

instance. They might be called the biological laws of the social body.¹ False laws are not laws at all, since they contradict these higher wills. They are therefore as useless as an edict that should declare: 'From the date of promulgation of this present law, magnets must cease to have a magnetic field.' Or: 'Love is prohibited.' Enduring laws form the code of our obedience to necessity. LAWS are natural.

"Second drawer: Here we may put the good rules, the decrees of circumstances. Useful but temporary. RULES are artificial. (They often go by the name of laws.) It is true, alas, that certain rules are perpetuated, and it is against those that I have a special grudge. (Property, for instance.) They derive from their very hoariness a sort of pretension to the old hereditary nobility of the Laws. They were only rules of expediency to begin with, and they have remained in force by that strange power of things that have lasted so long as to become a habit. A sentinel had a post assigned him one day, centuries ago, for some particular reason. To guard a rose, perhaps, that the queen had admired, and meant to pick on her way back. For generations a sentinel is posted there, day and night, till some inquisitive journalist asks what that idiot is doing there. Our codes, our customs, our feelings, our minds and even our bodies are infested with sentinels of this kind, forbidding us to pass where there is no longer any reason why we should not. In the arts, in science, in politics, sociology and economics it is the same. Many so-called laws in art are only the sort of disciplinary rules that great artists, scientists, writers, politicians, sociologists, economists have set for themselves and others, to avoid the risk of the haphazard—the antithesis of art. Their success has given these rules so much prestige that they are mistaken for laws. That is how academism arises in every specialised occupation: by confusing rules with laws. Or worse still, ignoring the laws and rendering religious obedience to dead rules.

"Yet rules are necessary. For the basic laws of art, like the

¹ Laws appear to vary in the course of time. That is because of the rules of expediency grafted on to them. The sequel will throw light on this note.

elementary social laws and the fundamental biological ones, though they punish directly or indirectly all those who transgress them, do not tell us clearly what to do. They leave us floundering in the chaos of possibilities. So to save our ideas and actions from becoming diffused, and to contribute to convergence, we must choose certain rules. These rules, if they are really efficacious, are not arbitrary. If they are to help us obey the cardinal Laws, they must belong to the family of the laws, but be more specialised, sharp-edged and converging. Here is a notable example of good rules, invented for himself by a musician, that is, an artist whose mind and heart recognised the Laws, Johann Sebastian Bach. The work in question is the so-called 'Goldberg Variations'.

' . . . The composer appears to have surrounded himself with so many, and such strict barriers . . . that all spontaneity must be denied him. The length of each variation—thirty-two bars—and its division into two equal parts, are fixed once for all. It is the same with the harmonic scheme. In the variations in canon form, which are some of the most beautiful and affecting, the first voice determines the second exactly; but Bach has to take the latter into account in composing the first, since they develop in concert. And it is the same with the bass and the plan of the modulations.

'What margin remains then for the actual composition, in this system where all the elements influence each other in an almost absolutely predestined way? Yet Bach can stir our emotions; and on this narrow path, bristling with obstacles, display all the wealth of his sonorous imagination, giving us the impression of the greatest freedom, I might even say, of a certain carelessness. . . . Upon analysis of these little masterpieces, which can be taken to bits like a machine, it is hard to decide whether the unity in diversity they possess to so high a degree is the product of the combination of these elements, or the source from which it springs. . . . It may be that the conventions freely accepted by the

composer were active from the beginning, from the birth of the primitive image, the germ of the work, rather than in the second phase, that of the actual work of composition. If that is so, in certain cases at least, we may understand better how the composer contrives to move easily amid obstacles accumulated as though on purpose. We might then assume that the narrow limits Bach set himself in the Goldberg Variations were no hindrance, no outward barrier to him. They did not contradict his most intimate impulse, because they had contributed to the genesis of that impulse. . . .’

(Boris de Schloezer).

“This confirms my convictions and materially illustrates what I was saying. Bach was able to lay down rules for his imagination to help it obey those underlying laws which, though unformulated, are a *sine quâ non* of good music. We must not mistake the rules of musical treatises for these laws, which undoubtedly answer to the profoundest needs of our whole being, in the sphere of music.

“Of course all artists have not set themselves such strict rules. Only the greatest have the courage to take such tasks upon them, and the skill to benefit by such constraint. But we may be sure that those who set themselves no such rules, either intentionally or intuitively, never produced works of much more value than those of the dog letting itself go against the trees, as its fancy takes it.

“We can see now why rules were a help to Bach, and why these same rules purloined from Bach paralyse the wretched Conservatoire student, whose little song they stifle. We see too why very strict rules could be useful to Racine and harmful to Voltaire. Racine’s alexandrines were born, so to speak, subject to the alexandrine cadence, the cadence of his century. The poet had only to perfect them by paying ingenious court to the rules which, though formulated by others, suited him so marvellously. As he has proved. Voltaire reasoned much and felt little. Though the rules of reason help us to reason,

the rules of poetry, which should lead us to feel, could only embarrass Voltaire, who was more or less devoid of feeling. His poetry is unreadable in consequence.

"It is the same in plastic art as in music and writing. I have just discovered that myself with my picture *LIFE*. The general architecture of the picture was not established until I was able to formulate the rules of its structure. That is to say at the moment when I became aware of the organic connexions present, but not yet evident, in the original image as it issued one fine day from my imagination.¹ (In the same way, a well-constructed book is virtually finished when we can at last discern clearly its plan and articulations.)²

"I must apologise for speaking of my picture after quoting such great examples. There is no question of pride about it, I assure you. But an example is an example, and I can talk about this one with full knowledge of the facts. It gave me trouble enough!

"You may remember that I saw the first version of my picture to be a failure in September 1932. After recognising this failure which, because I would not admit it, was demoralising me, I recovered my tone. I renewed contact with social life. After a year's work, on the 9th August 1933 I settled on the outline drawing of my new composition. It had gone through so many evolutions and expurgations that nothing was left of the first version but the 'social' cell: '*Teeming Crowd*.' This cell had proliferated till it took up the whole surface, and ended by expressing the essence of what I had been trying to say at the outset of the venture. First let me sum up the principal rules I set myself when I began the painting in 1931:

1. Avoid every accessory, natural or manufactured, too current in pictures of a mural style, such as costumes with

¹ The picture was signed on the 17th May 1938.

² *Note 1938*. "... In fact," said Charensol to René Clair, "like Racine with his tragedies, you say to yourself: My film is made; I have only to shoot."

"Yes, the scenario-writer should make his film at his desk, visualising it exactly, as the architect plans a house: providing for everything beforehand, down to the smallest details."

hierarchical folds, vases, architecture, ships, chariots, tools, laurels, olive-trees, cypresses, 'noble' objects, etc., etc.

2. Give common outlines, as far as possible, to neighbouring bodies, so that a third image may be born of the two first images as they melt into each other; and thus, joining up one by one, the figures in the picture may form a plural unity.

"Later on I set myself new rules, as follows:

3. Tend to give the nocturnal figures negroid types; to the diurnal ones the features of the white races; to those of the evening the characteristics of the yellow races. All this in order to utilise the specific colours of their skins, and their 'light values', to signify in a *direct* manner the time of day, without having to darken, lighten or colour the flesh tones contrarily to the *nature* of their forms. Are all cats really grey when candles are away? Not a bit of it. And a white man painted black has not the same shape as a negro.

4. Construct the poses so that they may suit both the actions and the situations of the drama. Negro—night—Genesis—beginning. Whites—day—action—prime of life. Yellow races—sunset—evening—end—death.

5. Reject all indirect symbolism, and therefore all conventional mythology.

6. Exclude landscape. Therefore no sky, water, clouds, stars.

7. Leave no hole in the composition. No empty spaces. Nothing but flesh.

8. Start the action in the top right-hand corner with elementary, 'protoplasmic' shapes, seeking as it were their proportions and density. Make these shapes become more 'normal' and dense as they progress towards conception and parturition. The young lovers will awaken with the dawn ('subject-reason'). The 'plastic' reason for this rule is that, the bottom of the picture being nearer the eye-level,

it is right that the shapes should be more definite and detailed. (Rule 9, detached for clarity's sake, has its place here.) Same order for the two wings of this triptych without hinges. Make the figures of a larger size at the top than at the bottom, progressively, so as to produce an impression of growth, of 'rising'.

9. Show a differentiation down to the fingernails, so that new aspects may be discovered as the figures approach. Combine and detail the surfaces so that every part, even the smallest, may be interesting when isolated from the rest.

"These new rules gave rise to a very different composition from the first.

"In the course of the work the shapes crystallised quite suddenly as soon as the composition had adopted as its centre, generating form, colour and light, the luminous child which, like Day, enters as a rebel. All the other shapes were begotten of that seed. It grew, so to speak, after the manner of an air with variations. And it was with this young Day that the execution of the painting began. His colours, long thought out for their own sakes, but above all for their consequences, governed all the other colours. I gave Day the hues of the solar spectrum. From his prismatic colours, the brightest on the palette, radiate red, yellow, blue, green scales, running over the whole picture, growing gradually darker towards the edges. In this way I was able to realise my earlier wish to make bright and neutral tones 'cohabit', but in quite different forms from those I had first thought of.

"I know that these nine rules, at first a desperate hindrance, were really a tremendous help to me. They were my nine Muses. And each one helped the others.

"The first strokes of the grey 'under-painting' were laid on on the 30th October 1933. To-day the canvas is entirely covered with its first coat, the one which will never be seen. I kept it purposely to the middle register, with no brilliant passages or deep basses, so as to leave room for progressive intensification. Above all, to save up the joy of placing the

accents. I promised myself this as a final reward, so as to keep up till the end the pressure and warmth of desire. A rule is only fruitful when it excites desires. The essential technique of individual, social and creative life consists, I am convinced, in keeping desire alive.

"In eight or ten months, as I supposed, *LIFE*, with its hundred and fifty figures, would perhaps be finished.¹ That's a long time. Without rules I should never have succeeded at all. There were days when it seemed as if I should never reach my goal; it appeared to retreat as I advanced—like the carrot before the donkey.

"Delacroix says: '*I have never undertaken a task which did not, at some time or other, seem hopeless.*' He said too: '*One is not a Master until one has taken all the patience with things that they require.*' And Vauvenargues: '*Patience is the art of hoping.*' Yesterday we were all fire and flame. To-day our breath is not worth a tinker's curse. To-morrow we may revive, if we blow hard enough upon our embers.

"What more shall I say of my work? The plans were decided. The picture was like an orderly building-yard, where every day, enthusiastically, I came to work.

"I have stated the wherefore of my composition at length. As I established the main points of it where intuition and reason indicated, the architecture of those organic rules, that were trying to get themselves conceived, became gradually clear to me. *LIFE* existed now quite lucidly in my mind, and you can see the ghost of it drawn here in black and white.

"On the canvas were born the colours called for by the shapes, the shapes themselves being intended for the colours which were to exhibit them."

"I thought," said Mr. But, "that SENSIBILITY played the chief part in art."

"It plays a huge part. We might as well go into that. Sensibility was essential from the very beginning, from the

¹ Note March 1938. Fate disposed differently, as will be seen in the second volume of this book, where I intend giving the author's criticism of the finished work. *LIFE* has just been acquired by the French State for the Luxembourg Museum. (Quai de Tokio Paris.)

first conception. And even during the organisation of the work. Laws are laconic—they are frameworks only. Rules are a little less dumb, but still too much so. Sensibility must perceive what laws and rules do not tell us.

“The lucid reasons of a composition may be explained in part, and I think I have done so. But at this stage of *LIFE* it would be impossible to describe in detail how I debated with my sensibility on the colours, lights, substances—three entities in one—none of which has any meaning without the others. My reason had little more to say, and my Muse-rules were twiddling their thumbs. What makes a flower smell sweet or stink? Too red a mouth, I discovered, can destroy the whole general effect and all the combinations that have contributed to it. If your palette is the least bit too bright, it will intrude upon you in the character of a hireling dyer. Properly regulated, it is ‘true’. The least bit lower, poverty-stricken. It becomes a question of thousandths and even less. A huge cathedral may be spoilt by having a millimetre scratched off it. Our sensibility, which will often take a gross pretence for reality, is at other times curiously subtle. There are times when sight decides according to reasons of its own that we cannot define in words. That we do not even know. A violin is made to sing by Yehudi Menuhin, and is afterwards played on by César Cui-cui. Each plays as ‘correctly’ as the other. Each follows the same tempi, appears to place the ‘same’ accents. Menuhin enchants us; Cui-cui leaves us cold.

“So what we call sensibility must henceforth decide whether our plans, once realised, ‘get across’. For our intellectual intentions are only justified when the plastic means *act* well. It is not a thing one can write about. The capacity of reasonable prose comes to an end where the world of sensibility with its infinitesimals begins. These are ‘nothings’ in ordinary parlance, yet these millions of nothings make or mar the work. The picture is simple enough to begin with; but in the end it is a world of confederate reciprocities. Two neighbouring tones are seen as they are not in reality. These appearances fire the train of a thousand others, as a fireworks cartridge

sets alight, one by one, all the others in the set piece. The first candle was white when it burned alone; the second, pink by itself, makes the white look green, and turns purple itself at the same time. Thus in a work of art everything modifies everything else *ad infinitum*. All these individual alliances, victories or submissions end by concurring, and the multi-coloured lights build up a luminous unity as diverse as the train of the spectrum, at once unique and special like the daylight, and like the polychrome vibration of the stars which is summed up in the teeming haze, unique and unanimous, so to speak communal, of starlit nights. Or like the intellectual sum of human beings which constitutes the mind of unanimous epochs. There are common truths that come in through the eyes. Heraclitus said:

“*Everything is governed by two things : knowledge and wisdom.*”

“So if at this stage of the work the intellect leaves the artist in the lurch, he still has guides, fortunately, to tell him whether he is succeeding in expressing himself, or losing his way. His occult model sends him signals of repudiation or encouragement. If the shape, the colour, the sound, the word he puts down really corresponds to those expected by the virtual image, the author feels an understanding growing up between the latent work and himself. And if he has materialised with supreme truth some essential part, he feels in his belly, his lungs, his heart, his loins (these are not figures of speech) a strange, instantaneous shudder. This thrill through his whole being always surprises him afresh by its savage force. It is in his guts, and yet profoundly satisfying, soon to radiate through his spiritual being. For intelligence is exalted by the success of its accomplished purposes, and the final justification of its abstract, slow elaborations. This tumult affects the artist as the pit of the stomach is affected by the music, the ideas, the gestures that correspond to our deepest needs. This exaltation takes the inventor by surprise, all of a sudden, when nothing had led him to expect the accomplishment of

any decisive act. His centres have been touched by the passage of nature's lines of force. These are his moments of paradise, by which he is made aware that he has won, that he has 'found himself'. All discoverers, in science, art and thought, know these rare and extraordinary moments. It is as though the curtain hiding truth from us were suddenly drawn aside to let us see it.

"What we have done, what so strangely excites us, may seem very bad to other people. But if the whole work induces in us this extraordinary biological and mental vibration; if the shapes, colours, volumes, lines, sounds, ideas seem to insinuate themselves into actual voids in our flesh and our mind, fitting like the cast to the mould, and relaxing us like a spasm of love, the work is sincere and it is a thing of which we stood in great need. If others feel the same about it, it is a useful, social creation.

"The upshot of which, Mr. But, is that:

"A second-rate work is no better for following certain rules. But a great work justifies the rules without which its author could not have accomplished it. Moreover the rules help to throw light, for the 'users', on the whole of the work, and on the reasons of its smallest organs. The pleasure of understanding enhances the pleasure of feeling. And feeling, on the other hand, helps one to understand. Look at Seurat's *Grande Jatte*. How greatly this marvellous picture is indebted to the few, but strict, rules which Seurat laid down for himself!¹ There can be no purity without rules for getting rid of impurities.

"Now sum up, Mr. But!"

My pupil, who had been getting on since 1930, thought for a moment, and then counted on his fingers:

"1. Sensitiveness beforehand, during and afterwards.

2. Social and moral codes, like the arts, demand enduring laws, and rules of expediency.

¹ Note 1936. See D. Catton Rich: *Seurat and the evolution of La Grande Jatte*. University of Chicago Press.

3. The essential laws, which are the real ones, are immanent, inevitable laws, on which the success of every act and undertaking must depend.

4. Bad laws are not laws at all.

5. Good rules are the auxiliaries of the fundamental laws.

6. Bad rules are worse than nothing."

Mr. But, somewhat unnecessarily, added this brief commentary:

"And long live the policeman!"

"There would not be so many 'bum-pushers' wanted if everybody understood what we've been talking about."

"What is a—er pusher?" asked Mr. But with some embarrassment.

"A policeman whose duty it is to shove people into prison."

"I suppose," said Mr. But, "it is due to bad legislation that so many of them are wanted?"

"Not altogether, but to some extent. Berlin and Rome certainly need more policemen than Paris or London; they both have their armies of informers. If all laws were good laws . . ."

"Wouldn't RELIGION help?" asked Mr. But, who has a leaning to Theism.

"That's a delicate question, which most people avoid. Let us tackle it.

"Rational 'proofs' for or against God seem to me nonsensical.

"God has never died of a negative opinion, nor been born of an argument. I believe there is a God problem. Reason has so far afforded no real proof for or against. Any decision for or against has therefore been taken on grounds of sentiment."¹

"Perhaps a priest could reveal the reason of dogma? Perhaps theology would set our anxieties at rest and answer our questions? The theologians have thought of everything."

"Certain peoples get satisfaction out of vagueness; but we

¹ *Art*, p. 173-174.

Frenchmen dislike being left in a fog. A religious Frenchman is not easily satisfied with a general, diffuse assurance. He wants to see God appear straight in front of him, as you are standing in front of me; and to be able to touch Him. Every Frenchman should be christened Thomas. But God does not often lend Himself to being photographed. He had every right not to; but it makes belief in Him still more difficult. We are an argumentative people. Even those who do not believe in reason go on reasoning none the less. For them there exist only two stable positions: strict incredulity or wholesale belief; and an unstable, most uncomfortable position, taken up by those who are tempted by both sides, like the donkey in the fable."

"What is your opinion of Grace, then?"

"I take Grace to be an actual state, whether the state of believing or of not believing, or even the state of being able to disregard these questions altogether. All these are actual states like being hot or cold."

"The theologian gives reasons for his faith which would perhaps satisfy our intelligence if we were humble enough to believe . . ."

"Reasonable proofs only appeal to the reason. Your theologian, in this case, is a rationalist. And I believe there are realities which escape our reason, for the moment at any rate. Methods based on the 'will to believe' seem to me very like mental 'cramming' by others or oneself, the convincing effects of which are not to be denied. But I dislike all this tampering with ourselves by ourselves.

"Belief is an actual, positive state, just as disbelief is a negative one.

"I am quite aware that we are very much under control. But I can give neither shape nor name to the power that rules us; and the images and ideas offered me by the various religions do not answer to what I feel.

"The clearest notion of the universe I can form for myself at present is that of an immense, vibrating symphony. Stars, planets, nebulae, comets, meteors, the dust that comes from

the stellar spaces to blacken the eternal snows and add to the weight of the world; the Aurora Borealis; radiations of every kind; trees, birds, children, a vase, my fountain-pen, the ink in it, and the gold of the nib; all living creatures, vegetable and animal, you and I, everything and everybody, I think of them as belonging to the radium family. Of things and men as of the nature of thunder. Of everything as the sum of anamorphosis of one single force. God, if you like.

"I am happy to feel myself in a symbiosis, as it were, with everything that exists. I sum up the universe in myself, like the drop of water in the garden, quivering in the hollow of a flower-cup, condensing into a minute picture the sun shining on the world and everything visible above the Earth. And at the same time I can feel myself quivering in the heart of that quivering drop, and of the huge drop that is our universe. I feel useful to others, as the raindrop is of use in the general chemistry, while contributing to my serenity this morning by helping me to feel at one with things. As a child I was always unhappy when I was alone. Now everything is a part of my family. A fly annoys me by buzzing round my head, and I forgive it, little nucleus of waves that it is. This year I can even 'identify' myself with the maggots in the cherries without too much disgust.

"We're at the beginning of a new era, my friend. The machine will soon be made to do bond-service for the liberation of the bodies and minds of us all. But what of God? Our reconstituted society will not be happy if it is content merely to eat and drink well, dress well, sleep well, be well housed, furnished with good cars, good education, good reasoning powers.

"Our society, now a thrall to labour, tired, bewildered by anxiety, has little time to think—really think—on the question of God or any other question. Its slender resources of thought are absorbed by its discontent. The masses therefore can do without philosophic thought. But in a leisured society, like the one we are looking forward to, the mind will have time to make thorough use of itself. No doubt we shall at first witness

an attack on the Churches, as the focus of social retrogression,¹ and during that time the peoples will make the revolution the object of their religion. But when the social mechanism has been regulated on a sound system and is working well, it looks as though the use of the mind, if we are honest with it, must inevitably lead us to the same questions as were answered by the religions. Unsatisfactory answers, to my mind, but satisfying to many human beings. We shall not always be content to believe with Auguste Comte that the problem of Existence is insoluble, and should therefore be left alone. Nor can we forever be content to affirm that there is no Cause. For this idea is not only shocking to our minds, but entirely repugnant to our feelings.

"We must now, as a matter of urgent necessity, concentrate on defending the future of our threatened civilisation, and give priority to reason. But need we consider the universe, mind and feeling as finally, absolutely incompatible?

"It would be a very disastrous surrender on the part of reason, if it were to accept as radically irreconcilable the present contradiction between its own need of knowing, and the philosophies and sciences which refuse it any satisfaction.

"I look upon insatiable curiosity as one of the undeniable rights of the mind.

"At the present time none of the negative answers to the question of God—nor the utter denial of its existence—is more satisfying, rationally speaking, than those given by the religions, even the most absurd of them, which is saying a good deal."

Mr. But: "Their answers were a bit simple."

"I should say so. Over-simple, even. But why should they be complicated? Complication is not necessarily a sign of truth.

"The religious answers satisfied the mind—seldom very exacting—of the believers. But the explanation of things by Chance cannot satisfy the mind of all non-believers, of whom I am one. To me, this explanation of everything by Chance

¹ 1936. The Church and Franco.

is repulsive because it is inhuman. It does not even attempt to satisfy a profound natural need. It is cowardly, in fact, and at the same time rather presumptuous. For it is a queer way of showing faith in progress and helping to bring it about, to decide arrogantly that we can never know, for the simple reason that we have not yet succeeded in knowing.

“My dear But, let us consider—roughly and rather arbitrarily, having regard to their interdependence—the content of the religions so far evolved. They consist of:

(a) Metaphysics. The answer to certain questions which the mind asks itself, and cannot solve by direct observation.

(b) Morals. How to act rightly. Notion of Merit.

(c) Mysticism. Awareness of God. Awareness of oneself in God.

(d) Belief. As in every other domain.

(e) Reason. As in every other domain.

(f) (Aesthetics) In parenthesis, because Aesthetics is an integral part of everything human, and cannot therefore be separated from any of the other factors, except artificially.

“The ‘religion’ of the future will perhaps form a ‘summa’ as it did under Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. It no longer attempts to be one, but lays claim only to the spiritual department. ‘Science’ is not yet a ‘summa’, because it leaves out the questions belonging to religion. The complex content of the new religion would be fused, so to speak, in the idea of social sharing. A religion founded not on miracles but on science, because in the human make-up the rational will probably be the dominating factor; a trend which the sarcasms of believers of the old school will not greatly affect. As it is, the Neothomism of Maritain, and the surprising evolution of certain Protestant churches, especially in England, show a strong trend in this direction. Science too, in its highest expression, is seen to-day to be taking great strides towards this integration. The scientists of the 19th century refused to treat any subject outside the most obvious actuality, that is

to say they treated a mere fraction of the world. (And we have no right to reproach them, since this application of their entire effort to a voluntarily limited field has brought us to our present wonderful state of knowledge.) The best scientists of to-day tend to consider everything, even the most subtle happenings in the world and in man himself, as the subject-matter of science. They even attempt at times to observe the most improbable manifestations, for fear of letting slip a particle of reality. Their mind is determined not to neglect anything pertaining to itself, nor anything that exists, or might exist.

“The homoeopaths are in high esteem. Paracelsus and the ancient alchemists are to some extent rehabilitated. The makers of gold are not interfered with, unless they prove to be swindlers, because since the discoveries of Becquerel, Curie, Ramsay and Rutherford we know they are not attempting the impossible. I fancy some scientists even have the future foretold them by the astrologers, which is perhaps going too far. But there is no longer any ungenerous hostility between the lucid scientific spirit and these premonitions arising from the subconscious, that we can only feel, and which may be the approach of something we are about to know. At any rate the waves of hidden things may now at last reach us, for we have taken out the ear-plugs with which science in its raw youth had stopped our ears.

“Renan was right when he said: “*The supreme task of science is to solve the riddle of the universe.*”

“This task science had renounced for a time, but it is now going back on its own renunciation and beginning to face every possibility, even that of calling upon the help of psychic faculties hitherto in bad odour; and in general upon all the secret and still doubtful functionings of the universal Being, the social being, the human being. Nameless phenomena, better left nameless, since naming them would mean inventing new words to define the uncertain, at the risk of giving substance to it, or of using old terms clogged with old notions, which often leads to disastrous results. For instance, the political creeds of all parties to-day are inflated with the word mysticism.

They assert that a mystical belief is necessary to every political system, every revolution, society or individual. And what is mysticism but the sense of entire participation of the individual in some vague phenomenon? The sense, for instance, that one is a part of that human body in the second degree which we call society, and that body in the third degree which is the universe? This is truly a feeling of a mystical nature, like the feeling the religious have of being merged in their God. But is that what mysticism signifies in the politics of our day? Does it not rather signify a passionate ideal? Only the materialists are afraid of the word ideal, because it is so much used by the religious. To avoid it, they prefer using the word mysticism, although it represents the most religious of all religious phenomena. The uncertainties of our vocabulary lead to a mass of contradictions.

“*Science has advanced because the philosophers . . . have corrected the language, and people have been able to reason better.*” (Condillac.)

“The politicians might well follow their example.

“To come back to mysticism:

“In the mystical state of the old kind, at its paroxysm, the subject in his communing ecstasy loses all contact with the immediate and the rational. I imagine that the modern mystic will tend at one and the same instant (or in alternating phases short enough to seem like a continuum)

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to think of himself} \\ \text{rationally} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{to be aware of} \\ \text{himself 'mystically'}^1 \end{array} \right.$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{as a biological individual} \\ \text{,, sentient} \\ \text{,, emotional} \\ \text{,, rational} \\ \text{as a social cell} \\ \text{,, a cell of the universe} \\ \text{as a cell of the universe} \\ \text{,, social cell} \\ \text{,, sentient individual} \end{array} \right.$	$\left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{l} \text{as a biological individual} \\ \text{,, sentient} \\ \text{,, emotional} \\ \text{,, rational} \\ \text{as a social cell} \\ \text{,, a cell of the universe} \\ \text{as a cell of the universe} \\ \text{,, social cell} \\ \text{,, sentient individual} \end{array}} \right\} \text{simultaneously}$

“There will be no new factor in this new behaviour. But the *simultaneousness* itself will be a new fact. Of the greatest importance, to my mind.

¹ Find a better word if you can.

"Our intellectual and moral structures do not vary much through the ages. As in organic chemistry, they appear only to differ according to the arrangement of their invariable radicals.

"Formerly the rational state excluded the mystical. One had to be in one sphere or the other; the two were, so to speak, mutually exclusive.

"They will soon be synthetised, to the great benefit of man's completeness. This fusion of two immense powers will greatly increase his ability to feel, understand and invent. Nothing that is human, or may become so, will henceforth be forbidden him. Many are now in a fair way to attaining the fullness of certain exceptional beings—exceptional because they were not only sensitively aware of the immediate, but had, so to speak, 'aerials' for the reality that is inaccessible to our ordinary senses. This capacity has all along been possessed by certain religious persons, philosophers, scientists, artists, poets and other really superior men, known or unknown."

Mr. But, thinking to please me, had invited one of his friends to join us at midnight. A funny chap, he said. We will call him Jules. He had been to see me before. One of those people who think everything simple, easy to explain. He attributes the existence of the world to Chance. To him the idea of chance is clear and explanatory. He thinks he has only to focus it on the incomprehensible, to understand. He reduces everything to an artless perfection of unity. For him a single word, chance, conceals the world. His brain is a sort of gramophone with a single record: Chance, Chance, Chance. He hasn't the sense to see that he is a sort of monotheist himself. I think none the worse of him for that; for over and above the religious beliefs founded on that aspiration, there exists in man a constant of his whole emotional and moral being, which inclines him towards the *mono*, towards unity.

Jules has the curiously unrelated gestures common to so many absent-minded people, absorbed by some fixed idea. When his mouth says yes, his head says no, and his fingers

are busy twisting off some innocent coat-button, or tearing at a familiar wart till it bleeds. When he walks one is surprised to see him making any headway, so loose and disjointed are his limbs. He is the sort that easily gets run over. Their body gets bored, and plays them tricks. Their brain appears to be detached, like the little ball inside a sleigh-bell. I once knew a mathematician who nearly burst his bladder because he had been pegging away since the evening before at the solution of an equation. These creatures who are all mind, who believe they can master everything, and are yet insensible to reality, have the irrational demeanour of marionettes, and are as automatic as they. A regular mechanical toy is Jules.

I take it out of him by telling him long-winded stories, and rubbing in the point:

“Without being prepared to see the ‘finger of fate’ everywhere, or believing that each of us is the puppet of an invisible playwright who sets us in action according to the plan of his comedy, it does look to me as though many of the events of our life could be more easily explained in that way than as the effect of mere will or mere chance. For instance, I have hardly ever succeeded in travelling except when the journey was sure to give me a considerable push in the direction I am bound to recognise as that of my life from its beginning. A direction which to avoid the somewhat pretentious word destiny, I prefer to call my line. My already considerable past convinces me that any haste to anticipate the cues given me by my hypothetical stage-manager will always be useless. I had to wait years before reaching Greece. And it seemed impossible ever to get to Rouen. Once—before 1900—my parents had decided to spend a public holiday there. Just as we were starting:

“‘Go and wash your hands, you little pig!’

“I turned up my sleeves. My arms were covered with little red spots. I’d got measles.

“‘As soon as you’re well again, we’ll go to Rouen.’

“I made haste to recover, and got it settled—I’ve always had a gift for sticking to things—that we should take the train

on the following Fifteenth of August. Scarlet fever turned up a day or two before. In 1929 we spent some time at Honfleur, not far from Rouen. Obviously I was nearing the goal. But the equinoctial tides interrupted the steamer service on the very day fixed for our excursion. Recently Dr. Joseph Lemoine, hearing of my Rouennese defeats, offered to break the spell for me, and after several failures he succeeded at last in helping me over the threshold of the forbidden city."

Jules: "Oh, come! That's all rubbish. If you'd really wanted to go to Rouen . . . It's not so difficult as all that. If there had been any real need . . ."

"That's just it. Was there any need at that time? **NEED** is a big word that has come down in the world, and means a good deal more than we suspect. We degrade it by restricting its meaning to the direct appeal of our organs, our senses and our mind. That is a miserable impoverishment of the huge word Need, father of Desire. A word symbolising all the motions that bring about the birth, life, duration and perpetuation of all creatures. Are not our needs the signals released by our secret self, our unconscious, so that in obeying them we may realise our destiny, of which it is already aware?

"I'm telling you these little incidents—and leaving out many others of the same kind lest I should be accused of exaggerating—not on account of their oddity, but because oddity seems to me the mark of powers that are unknown and whose ways are strange. I brood sometimes on this strangeness, because I feel that it allows us a peep into the fundamental mystery. At any rate these oddities help us to keep an open mind. Our minds are usually so tightly closed when things happen 'normally', that is, as we had innocently imagined things were 'bound' to happen.

"These journeys deferred against my will afford, moreover, a good example of the characteristic rhythm of my life: I succeed in what I am really determined on, but always after a great many difficulties. Entirely fortuitous exterior hindrances, fairly harmless in appearance, obstruct my path

regularly—as perfidiously as the wicket-gate of the Metro—as though to force me to wait for the right train. They force me to ripen, deepen, get up steam, until the day when the ‘crocodile’ lets me pass, often to my great astonishment, and at the moment when the event will prove most profitable to my undertaking.

“When things ‘work’ as regularly as that, so exactly in the same way throughout a whole life, you cannot help noticing it.

“And yet *is* that really how things happen? To be honest, I don’t know and can’t be sure. Are these convergences merely imagined, after the event, by the will, with its determination to command, or by the mind, with its determination to understand? We detest feeling ourselves to be the playthings of unknown powers and sons of an obscure destiny; and the mere fact of having detected the method of operation of these forces upon ourselves reassures us, because besides the pleasure of ‘understanding’ we get a ‘proof’ of the power of that will, and the hope that in the future, having learnt by experience, we shall be better able to control our life—that life won’t catch us out again. For this reason an explanation, though it can only have a retrospective effect on acquired facts, gives us none the less a feeling of mastery over things.

“So that I really have no idea whether what I think I know about the habits of my ‘Powers’ is true or imaginary. But in practice I believe in their activities, and this belief has a practical value, because:

1. It makes me intellectually very distrustful, and intuitively extremely confident.

2. It gives me a rule to go by, founded on this supposed ‘behaviour’, and thus giving some degree of unity and direction to my life. It keeps me constant to the same goals, and renews my patience in attaining them.

“And it would seem that constancy, patience and direction are pleasing to destiny.

"So you see it's very easy. I have only to conform to this architecture which, though not of my own designing, is yet not false for me. As in art, the worst that can befall one is the haphazard. My method saves me from that.

"It comes to this, that I behave as though I believed in a power that is manœuvring me according to its system, and I 'work with it'. My will seems to me no more than a force instilled in me, and perpetually maintained, by this Power of which I am ignorant, but which seems not to be ignorant of me or of my destiny."

Jules was wriggling about as though someone were tickling him. My ideas irritated him in a physical sense.

"Why not the finger of God, while you're at it?"

"I'm talking of the unconscious, not of God. God is the gilded name we give to our ignorance, as our pride gives the name of Chance to our impotence.

"The word God is little more than a symbol of the status and the particular faculties of the power—more or less vague, more or less defined—that we attribute to all that is beyond our understanding—the mystery-factor. Is there no mystery left in the world?"

"There's no mystery of any sort left in the world!" said Jules. "We know now that everything is the result of chance!"

"That's one way of looking at it," I said in a conciliatory tone, to avoid further discussion with this blockhead. "Another day, if you like, we'll talk about a power we can leave nameless, or call vaguely, and at the same time precisely, after so many others: Unity."

"Let's talk about it at once," said Mr. But hurriedly, seizing the opportunity of putting a stop to these dissertations, which were making his friend Jules stiffen and relax by sudden fits. Sergius remembered his own adventure with the deck-chair, and was afraid for my furniture.

I understood his worried look, and began in a pompous and pacifying tone:

"Man is immoderately fond of UNITY. Countless attempts have been made to satisfy this desire, that may be considered

as the effect of some purely human need, or as an intuition and a love of real unity. We have no means of deciding which. But the need is there; undoubtedly one of our constants. And when it is satisfied, the heart of man is filled with a great peace.

“Certain religions satisfied this need. ‘The world is a purpose of God.’ That’s not so bad. Unfortunately religion took to differentiating between soul and body, turning the body into a contemptible rag. The body was a thing of mud, fit only for the dunghill. But the soul was an immaterial flame, a sort of superlatively seductive ether. *‘Some think the soul is of fire, for this is the subtlest and most incorporeal of all the elements.’* says Aristotle, summing up Democritus. That’s all very well in poetry.

“All the same, by reducing things to two elements only, spirit and matter, and the gods to a single god—like the god born of the metaphysical genius of Israel—they approximated unity with tremendous economy. (The Romans, terribly behindhand, had 30,000 gods.) Thus the old Ionian atomists courageously conceived of all the phenomena of the universe as built up of grains of a single substance, linked together in different ways. But they attributed special atoms to the spirit, *‘admirably fine’*, *‘most subtle’*. Worthy of the aristocratic spirit, in fact, small enough to be accounted abstract. This spiritualist hierarchy based on size is quite amusing. But therewith they retained in the heart of their beautiful unity-that-might-have-been the duality of soul and body, and thus ruined a very pleasing form of Monism.

“It is a patent psychological fact that subtle fluids are considered genteel. The fiery fluid, the aerial, the luminous, the electric fluid find favour with us; they are images worthy of the spirit. The infinitely great and the infinitely small appear aristocratic too; everything that escapes our immediate perception and our understanding. The poetry of the fluid, the ethereal, the rare, the uncertain, the distant, the immeasurable, inconceivable, impalpable, inaudible, ineffable. At bottom, a good deal of the furious resistance to materialism

arose from the too great size attributed to the grains of matter. A size too vulgar to suit the soul.

"Materialism therefore was up against a sentiment due to a curious affective connexion between smallness, fluidity and aristocracy on the one hand, largeness and vulgarity on the other.

"To-day, for a wonder, there are no more grains. Unless it be the grains of electricity, made of force without material support. And so by a curious 'looping' we have arrived at a generalised materialism which is really an *immaterialism*.

"This suggests that one of the aims of the highest form of science may be to make things agree with images and feelings, and thus render phenomena acceptable to our pre-established, sentient and emotional apparatus.

"As for God. . . ."

"Science has proved that He does not exist!" cried Jules, going off the deep end again. His chair creaked. Mr. But glanced at him. He stopped talking, and settled down once more. Mr. But then went on pulling out the last hairs in his nostrils. He has queer nervous fits now and then, like a person dropping off to sleep, or immediately after death. I went on:

"Science does not tell us what made the world, for the simple reason that it doesn't *know*. And science owes it to itself only to affirm what it knows, or feels pretty sure about. But at one time it denied the very existence of these questions; now it sets them on one side, thus recognising implicitly that mysteries exist. The Christian God Himself is looked upon as a mystery by the faithful. I have met honest pastors and priests who made no pretence of knowing whether God has a beard; whether it is blond, brown, white or red, and whether He has a sculptable, paintable, imaginable or even conceivable shape. The greatest mystics are passionately aware of the thing they call God; a phenomenon revealing itself to their sensibility. It is enough for them to feel and commune with the essential Force; they do not ask it for images and ideas of itself.

“Remember that Plotinus thought of matter as an emanation of God; an emanation that was always trying to take on more and more perfect forms, in order to merge again with that God. Electromagnetism suggests the fusion of the various corporeal structures in the general electromagnetic phenomenon. These bodies, after assuming their particular shapes, return by disintegration to the Mother Force. Ions de-materialise into photons, in a flash of light. The Joliot-Curies have lately demonstrated this. Thus the Beauty Queen—and dung—are finally ‘deified’ into immaterial waves, and return to their source. You may call the source the Reigning God, the Body of God, the Divine Spirit, Electromagnetism, as you please; or call it nothing at all, which is safer. The Gnostics gave the name Eons to the intermediate emanations between God and the material world. This may have been a play on words, for Ion was the son of Apollo the Sun—his emanation. Svante Arrhenius gave the name Ions to the emanation of free atoms, emanating from an electrolyte.

“The curious dualism of the spiritualists, spirit and matter, is no longer indispensable to the feeling of which I have spoken. ‘*God is Light!*’ Have you never heard that sung in church? The tendency nowadays is to think of all phenomena, everything in the universe, as the various avatars of a sort of light. ‘*Light is transformed into matter and matter into light*’ (Langevin). As a solar myth, that’s not too bad. It would not displease the ancient sectaries of Osiris, or the Parsees of Persia, who from time immemorial have sacrificed to Ormuzd the Sun.

“We are at last witnessing, after many religious and secular failures, the abolition of the old discrepancy between the substance of the spirit and that of matter, their unification in a fine image of Unity, become plausible at last. A seductive image of consubstantiation has come to birth, which many religious persons may prefer to the clumsy images of the theogonic cosmogonies, even if it means using God as the clef. Thus our fundamental passion for unity is, if not finally satisfied, at least more flattered than ever before.

"The available assets of the mystics and of the mystic-materialists have found one same myth on which to perch. The Spirit perches on the tree of Science.

"The history of science shows us that we must always be prepared for sensational surprises. Let us therefore beware of imitating the prejudiced laymen, writing in the spirit of the priests and scientists of Galileo's time, who persecuted him in the name of 'science such as it was'. We must go straight ahead, at the risk of running into the lamp-posts. We should even welcome the lamp-posts, for it is by collision with them that science has always progressed. Progress goes leaping from error to error—or rather, from relay station to relay station. Take Lamarck and Darwin, most of whose conclusions are contested to-day, although Science is proceeding along the road they first cleared. Needless to say I am not in any way taking up the cudgels against orthodox science or specialised scientists. If it were not for the scrupulous, ingenious, admirable care they have taken over their work, we should never have arrived at our present thrilling stage of knowledge. I have merely been explicit for the sake of those who listen with half an ear.

"But we must never forget the enormous contribution of the heterodox. In the 19th century alone, in the single department of biology, we have Wallace the amateur, who so nearly proved the forerunner of Darwin. We have the amateur botanist Jordan, who, in his attempt to destroy Darwinism for God's sake, discovered the law of mutations. (His contemporaries voted him a bore for his pains.) His researches provided Vries with the foundations of his famous theories. It was the monk Mendel who discovered the laws of heredity, the foundations of modern biology—which were not taken seriously till 1900, thirty-six years after his death. Then there was Pasteur, so cruelly ridiculed to begin with.¹ I need not point out that all the great artists, poets, sociologists of that time were heterodox.

¹ See *Art*, p. 310, for the story of the unforgettable Academician Dr. Bouillaud, mistaking Edison's phonograph for a ventriloquist's trick.

"Everybody knows it."

"I didn't," said Mr. But.

"Let us doubt, but at the same time keep an open mind. Above all, let us never get into a rut.

"The fact of being a man is infinitely more marvellous than any of the strange things man observes or invents; and the prodigious strangeness of nature is beyond all imagination.

"Can floundering humanity be dragged out of the debilitating marshes of dogmatic religiosity by the great tractor of materialism? Certainly it can, if Matter is understood in the sense I have given it. It is the starting-point of an *all-wave philosophy*—we might call it *Hypermateralism*—which will form the basis of the mystic Gospel of immaterialism: an immaterialist materialism, a materialism of QUALITY."

"That's a word," said Mr. But, "which I don't seem to remember having heard you define, in any of our conversations."

"Very likely, Mr. But. As far as possible I avoid talking of things that can't be fairly clearly defined.

"And in this case it is rather difficult to make oneself clear. Most authors would be delighted, of course. It would give them an opportunity of floundering lyrically through pages and pages of mystery.

"I might pretend to answer you jesuitically, by asking you a sort of counter-question. I might say: you know that certain actions, like certain ideas, music, shapes, colours, go straight to one's heart, and that that is what's meant by quality. But we should have said nothing of the reason for it. And we should have got no nearer if I had pointed out to you that a very simple, humble, thing, such as a fountain-pen with a shape of thrilling proportions, or a certain wine, can entrance us profoundly, intensely, as much as the perfect gesture of a child, or the 'perfect' nose which once made you behave so foolishly.

"It is quality again which makes a certain sentence blind us to everything else on the page, as the belle of the ball draws all eyes towards her.

"But you know, Mr. But, I believe it would be better still to repeat what we said about the Parthenon, and add that quality is present when a phenomenon satisfies to a high degree some predisposition, some 'mould', some love that was in ourselves.

"Of course it would be much easier to understand and even to distinguish quality if we had a suitable gauge. There is no arguing with a thermometer. I would say with Lord Kelvin that knowledge comes above all from measurement.

The aim of science is to observe the relationships established between phenomena by numbers.

"One would like therefore to be able to 'measure' ideas, sensations, feelings, the productions of art, as one measures purely material substances to discover their quality. I believe, however, that we are nearing the time when we shall be able to read the quality of these phenomena on a dial. I have a gas fountain-pen which has the additional advantage of being a testing appliance for the engine of a car. It contains a bulb of neon gas which shows whether the sparking plugs are working properly, and whether the ignition is good. This apparatus reduces the amount of ink in the pen. I can only write five pages with it at the outside. I fill it up before beginning to write, and when it is empty, I myself have come to the end of my ideas. In fact it isn't often that I exhaust it—only on my very good days. Will they invent a fountain-pen to show whether what we are writing is worth while? It would be a jolly good thing. The idea is not so utterly absurd as it sounds. It has been definitely proved that thought manifests itself by means of a nervous electric wave. It is therefore possible to attempt the measurement of the thought-wave. Our laboratories, barbaric though they be, are yet in possession of cells of an enchanting subtlety for estimating the flow of the minutest undulations. Our wirelesses are capable of picking up really infinitesimal energies. By means of appropriate machines, a thoroughly coherent thought will no doubt appear one of these days to our eyes in the form of a pure melody. And a feeble thought will give out wrong notes; that

is, sounds foreign to the structure of the melody, like atmospherics on the wireless. Muddled thoughts will produce muddled sounds, contrary thoughts, sounds hostile to one another. For it is possible to form an auditory image by transforming all the phenomena. Music is transformed into lines on the film, and then sound is re-made from the graph, in the cinema. Just as our words, pictures, music and writings are *transformations* of our affective and mental structures. Our works are the 'materialisations' of these 'immaterialities', their solidification.

"The milliammeter of my wireless set shows the momentary intensity of the sound. The needle advances with the crescendos, retires with the diminuendos, follows strictly all the variations of volume. It is measuring quantity. But the needle shows the quality of the wave as well; for if an atmospheric mars its purity, it gives a sudden jump, as though someone had trodden on its tail. It doesn't go so far as to tell us whether the musician is playing out of tune. That is none of its business. But it does measure the purity of the carrier wave, and purity is a quality. Impurity is a parasite of purity. So perhaps one day we may be able to gauge the quality of the products of thought and art.

"These appliances might also measure the effects upon us of works and thoughts. This would decide the question of the true value of works of art. It would found a right relative hierarchy of creators, and would make of aesthetics—at present mostly guesswork—an exact science.

"As it is I often follow a visitor at a picture-show, chronometer in hand. The time he stops in front of each picture gives me some sort of notion of its effect on him. The marks of use on the bindings of good books is also a clue. Rough measurements, it is true, but measurements of quality none the less, if only of a statistical kind. Personal measurements, of course; but they will lead to the discovery of constants.

"To measure a quality, one need only measure its efficacy. This is constantly done in industrial technique. The quality of a product can be measured. From steel to thought, everything in the world is a play of waves. Once we are satisfied

that our entire physical and moral being is a play of waves, and that our sensations, ideas and feelings are effects of the same unifying phenomenon, I see no reason for declaring, *a priori*, that we shall never be able to measure them.

"If the 'emissions' of works of art, which render them perceptible to us, agree or interfere with the particular waves which form the individual, might it not be possible to detect the harmonies and discords thus produced, and to gauge their effects; that is, both the efficacy and the quality of the works themselves?"

Mr. But: "The psychophysicists have already attempted to measure the reactions of works of art on the sentient subject. The results were most disappointing."

"You exaggerate, but never mind. Were the methods employed really effective? Was the apparatus used of the right sort? The science of mensuration is developing daily in the most wonderful manner, and no doubt it is only a matter of discovering a suitable apparatus. But of course you must be really determined to find one. Above all, you should not make up your mind there is none to be found.¹

"Anyway, my dear But, are you aware that Professor Cazzamalli of Rome University registers the waves emitted by thought beyond the body? An aerial fixed above the thinking person picks up his waves, which interfere with the oscillation of a local transmitter emitting very short waves. The resulting wave can be heard, read and registered.²

¹ The greatness and errors of Fechner.

² *Note 1935*. Detroit, 5th April:

"A group of scientists taking part in the annual congress of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology made the following experiment during a meeting at the Harvard Hospital. Professors Halliwell Davis, F. A. Gibbs and E. L. Garceau, of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine, asked Mr. William L. Laurence, of the *New York Times*, who had offered to submit to the experiment, to sit down on a chair. They placed a wire in the lobe of his right ear, and another in an incision painlessly produced with the aid of novocaine. These wires were connected with an amplifier which in turn was fitted to a registering apparatus, in which a needle marked, in the form of waves, the electric vibrations emitted by his brain.

"The reading of human thought was not achieved, it is true, but it was possible to follow very clearly on the graph the moments of intense thought and of complete repose of the brain, according to the greater or less frequency of the waves registered.

"To continue: if everything, even the mind, is wave-matter, then, when we think, we materialise. For materialising is giving shape to waves.

"Then perhaps all our ideas, structures formed by the brain, invisible but corporeal, would be like goddesses issuing from the head of Zeus.

"By means of greatly perfected transposing instruments, we should see our thoughts. Painters, sculptors and architects, their hands in their pockets, would see their works taking shape on the screen, and being corrected of their own accord as the work of their brains went on. Musicians would hear their abstract thoughts taking shape. Images and music would be registered. What a saving of labour! Our feelings, which always retain a certain vagueness as we imagine them, would, suitably transformed, appear to us with the reality of metal, the delicacy of hoar-frost, or the grossness of a butcher's shop. What an enchanting face a thought of love, or the thought of a young child, must have! Brutal thoughts would spar like Carnera and Paolino. And what a film would be produced by a thinking brain! I should have been saved the laborious writing of this book.

"Is there really much difference between this picture I have painted of the future and our ordinary conception of abstract creation and its concrete realisation? What are our works but transmutations into dense and palpable materials of things shaped in our brain?

"The most extravagant ideas can often be reduced to the purely classical, for the possible is never the enemy of the real, and the future is merely the extrapolation of the present.

"Besides, if thought really emits waves beyond our bodies, these waves, during their production at least, are connecting ideas with forms while we realise them with our senses. Suppose these waves remain impregnated in our works? It would then be possible, by means of special detectors, to work back from the creation to the thought, and reconstitute it. Isn't that to some extent what we do now, when we contemplate a work

of art, and turning our sensations into thoughts, trace them to their source and imagine the thoughts of the artist?

"Perhaps the whole world is full of ideas roaming about its vastness, like souls in Tartarus. Acting as guardian angels by their actual presence, these infernal shapes are perhaps begetting the future? Do we not see ancient intentions being realised little by little? Where do they reside? Are they lurking in secret, sealed moulds in our brains, captive like those optical waves known as *stationary* because they have been trapped by the structures of crystals, and await their deliverance?

"We used to think of PERFECTION as a purely abstract notion of the mind, materially unrealisable. But is not perfection born at the moment when we imagine it? Imperceptible but fashioned, and of the same '*electricity*' as all of us? Might perfection be of this world after all? Ghostly, ethereal perfections becoming visible as soon as men had succeeded in revealing them? Thus did Ictinos reveal the Parthenon to the Athenians, like a crystal sleeping, unseen, beneath the waves . . ."

"Wow wow wow!" quoth Mr. But.

"I agree, Mr. But, that as Fontenelle said, we should always '*make sure of the fact, before inquiring into the cause . . . so as to avoid the absurdity of discovering the cause of what does not exist.*'"

"It is quite possible that none of the strange phenomena I have mentioned really exists. But a general trend is shaping itself, and will be more pronounced as time goes on, even if we are mistaken as to the facts which give rise to it.

"Don't forget that the task I have set myself as a writer and painter is to discern relationships, affinities, trends and constants, in spite of all contradictions. And to establish on this basis a personal and social *modus vivendi*, within a satisfying image of the universe.

"The year is growing old, Mr. But. We shall have to interrupt our conversations for a time.

"I know I have often shocked you. I myself am shocked at many of my ideas. But ought we to give in to this conservative resistance on the part of our mental habits? We have come to a

time when, more than ever before, we must have all our forces at our disposal. Let us decrystallise ourselves without delay. There are so many necessities to be satisfied, immediately, if we want progress to advance. Though of course progress is always unaccountable and always manages to assert itself, because it is Necessity.

“The majority of men grumble, put on the brake, rebel. But progress shoves them aside and passes on. Provokes a scandal. Then certain minds take up the ingenious task of transforming the old ideas in the sense of the new, and integrating the new ideas with the old, as these become compliant. They build easy bridges between the old and the new. If the new material and intellectual facts are considered without bias, or at any rate with a sincere attempt to be unbiased, it will be seen that these facts are never so new that we are not at least partially prepared for them. The new theories of poetry, painting, architecture, biology and physics frightened people to begin with. After a time they looked at them in cold blood and distinguished the sensational declarations intended merely to attract attention, from the real innovations. These then turned out to be entirely in conformity with some of the soundest traditional laws of writing, painting, building, and thinking, which had merely been forgotten or neglected. The same thing will happen with Socialism, at present so terrifying.

“Darwin published his doctrine about 1860. It provoked a frightful scandal, set to music by the Church. When Darwin died in 1882 he was buried in Westminster Abbey. The Church speaking through the Archbishop of Canterbury, declared that Transformism was in no way contrary to the Bible. Huxley, Darwin’s friend, whispered to his neighbour:

“‘*One of these days the parsons will set about burning us because we are not going ahead fast enough.*’

“But first and foremost, I repeat, let us never allow blind custom to get a grip on us. If we have not the gift of wonder, if we do not retain it and cultivate it perpetually, nothing great or new will be possible in art or letters, in science or in life itself. Wonder is a proof of intimate contact with the Real.

Let us never become like doctors insensible to suffering, midwives indifferent to life, whores surfeited with love, vergers shuffling along in their slippers, or scratching their behinds, as they carry the monstrance while Bach is at the organ."

This morning I had one of those half-dreams in which the material of the dream is indistinguishable from that contributed by the mind.

On the bed of a burning wind, its head hidden beneath a huge mass of hair, floated a mysterious black figure, imagined rather than seen. It was all vibrations, secretly sparkling, like the sky on a sultry night when it is charged with electric fluid. It carried its own night condensed around it like a thunder-cloud. Radiant light was concentrated upon a magnificent white mare, prancing happily, and thinking to itself: "How lovely to be without a bit or bridle!" Oblivious of the bridle that every particle of the world bears within it—Necessity and its Curb—the mare went prancing in a circle.

These two strange figures could not see each other. Each was unaware of the other's presence.

Unseeing, unconscious of the beautiful bounding creature, with the slow-moving arm of dreams the black Being drew an invisible circle as it slept. And this circle limited the cavalcade as relentlessly as a wall of steel.

I was seized with sadness at the thought that these two marvels should be ignorant of each other. If they could but unite their powers! thought I. I waited longingly for the moment when their eyes at last should meet and show them to each other. They saw each other and made love; were mated like warp and weft. . . .

Intuition and Reason.

EPILOGUE

1934

FOUR YEARS HAVE elapsed since the first pages of *Journey Through Life* and the sketch for my picture *LIFE* were begun. How much energy, strength and time have been wasted during those years? How many white hairs, how much wear and tear? (And how many people have been unable during that time to write, or sometimes even to buy food!)

Art is falling asleep. A few artists remain, alone, very much alone. When will a great period come again, great enough to call forth great works? Thousands are longing for it; but shall I live to see it? Art is dying out because people are far too selfish. It is almost impossible not to be selfish nowadays.

For the forty-eighth time I see the summer gilding the stalks of the corn, bringing out straw hats, laying bodies bare, tanning them, making their skins peel like the bark of birch-trees, by the action of the same forces that make the corn ripen, the swallows migrate and return, the dormouse sleep and waken. The forces that make fur moult, rain and hail fall, stars be created and scattered, asphodels bloom, flies gather honey, hair whiten and fall like leaves—birth and death. . . .

I have been to Greece again as I did four years ago. After such anxious years, in spite of my strivings towards an optimism that would restore my balance, or rather because of those strivings, I felt a need to roam for a while in the Eternal.

One day I was prowling about the Treasury of the Athenians, at Delphi. I looked at the harmonious building from every side—far off, close up, closer still. I climbed the side of the hill to see it from another point of view. Everything was changed, yet everything remained beautiful, right.

Everything worked together.

Anywhere else, the little white marble temple would have been a selfish leading lady and the rest a sacrificed décor. Here in Greece the architectural centre was an actor subject to the unity of the entire play. As far as the eye could see everything was coherent, unanimous and necessary, existing in a sort of total symbiosis.

But I was not a passive spectator. Passivity is not Greek. I was collaborating as an individual. By my movements, which altered the relationships of the building and of the near and distant objects, I was endowing the view with movement. And all the while there sang a mighty chorus of shapes, each indispensable to each—those contrived by the architect, and those that were formed by the lovely place itself. When I stooped down, the architrave was knit closely to the vigorous angle of the walls. When I stood up, everything rose with me, and the whole of great Delphi accompanied my movement. Design followed design, and from each there arose chants, heroic cries, hymns of praise, soaring melodies. When I stopped, they fell again into serenity, which is a state of expectation, not an end. I focused my camera, looking for the finest synthesis. I should have had a ciné-kodak, since everything kept changing. I felt I had not yet found the point of true harmony, summing up the unanimity of Delphi.

Then suddenly, led by the lines of the temple and the lines of the landscape, I pressed the release. The view-finder had just shown me the proud outline of the Phœdriades prolonging the line of the Treasury with the utmost precision. The crest of one of the rocks formed a strict continuation of the sloping walls; the modulations of the other rock carried on the laconic statement of the pediment. The ruggedness of the rocks enhanced the mathematical accuracy of the marble. The perfect chord! . . .

Everywhere in Greece nature takes an interest, a share in the works of men, and men take her into account. Nature commands, but so does man. Everything in Greece commands—literally each thing. From the smallest to the greatest, every element is distinct, and appears proud of itself, aware

of its necessity to the whole. At the same time everything, from the elementary particle to the largest member, from the myrtles at my feet to the sea of olive-trees in the valley, from the laurel-leaf to the mountain, the rhythmic chant of the harsh cicadas to the wide sea, the smallest architectural detail to the splendid mass of the Parthenon, everything, from the element to the elements, submits gracefully to what is higher than itself. Thus of nature and art in association is born the lofty idea of total unity, of the *συνφώνια*—the universal harmony between all creatures and all things.

The Greek architects curved the steps of the sanctuaries or inclined some of the columns, so that the buildings might be married to the hills and the plains, the curve of the sea's horizon and the slow, modulated monody of the mountains. Everything is necessary to everything else. There are no independent or negligible details.

Delphi in Greece suggests that the perfect form of human society will arise when there is complete agreement between the individual and the community, within the framework of forces prescribed for them by nature.

I climbed the hills of Delphi towards the theatre. I heard the voice of Prometheus. It was only an actor. But the magic of art and the beauty of the place, the power of the eternal truths, made the magnified voice seem as though it came from the whole great valley. And the resounding words seemed of marble, mellowed like the Dorian columns on the Hellenic slopes. Under the burning sun the beauty of the words was in harmony with the visible beauty. They rose between the mountains into the crystalline, faithful air, accompanied in their flight by eleven soaring eagles.

"Because of me, men no longer desire death!"

"What remedy hast thou given them for their despair?"

"Between them and despair I have set blind hope."

Prometheus, thy name signifies The Foreseeing. To-day men are slaves to the narrowest outlook. And most of them have lost hope. They have lost the hope that Fire, the father of

machines, Fire, thy son, O Prometheus Inventor and Liberator, had given them. For a few among them have taken sole and selfish possession of fire, the machines to which it gives life, and the huge forces it sets free.

Yet a vast nation has reconquered hope. A hope no longer blind, Prometheus, but clear-sighted. There are millions and millions of us now who know that life will give us dignity and happiness so soon as money ceases to be one of our cares. When to-morrow is no longer a formidable foe, set in ambush against men by the Masters of Power. When all that nourishes body and mind, and time to live and leisure to think, are fairly distributed in return for work—necessary work only. For thou, machine, art wonderfully fruitful; sun, thou art free; earth, thou art vast and prolific; waves and aeroplanes, you could bring help on the instant where there was want and suffering. But you have been commanded to scatter death; and even in time of peace, you are, like all machines, the servants of egoism and lucre.

A sorry age, you say? The throes of death must always be lamentable and cruel. But the falling of the withered stalks reveals the new seed sprouting.

Never has the plan of the future social edifice been so clearly before us.

Never has man been in command of such enormous material forces, by means of which his heart and mind may at last be set free.

Art is silent. Our thoughts are an emanation of our cells. They are kept healthy and coherent by the co-ordinating flow of the libido—that social spirit, as it were, of our individual community, whose obscure, unconscious workings make all our particles contribute to our life, itself the sum of our hidden lives. When the pressure of the libido slackens, body and mind rebel. The selfish cells, working henceforth for themselves alone, become a cancer that soon kills the body. Isolated, they die of their egoism, together with the “social” being they have poisoned. When the individual ceases to obey the social sense, which is a sort of libido at one remove, he becomes a social

cancer. Where contact is re-established, art will be reborn, for art is the song of social man.

Let us remember the teaching of the Egyptians, how they were obsessed by the idea of human fragility, and how they turned that obsession into a spur to action. Let us draw strength from our cares and vexations, the great strength of rebellion on which the foundations of great communities and civilisations are built.

Young men, let your will be strong, and you will not attain our age without having seen humanity in the full tide of progress. You will pity, but not despise, those of us who did all in our power to help on the birth of the world that was trying to be born. But if you are content to live as we were obliged to live, it is you who will deserve to be pitied by your sons for not having dared.

I re-read this book within sight of the guileless shores of Greece. Slow-moving sails were rocking in the gulf of Aegina, and on the Attic plain, dominated by the Acropolis, little white houses were shimmering in the limpid truth of the sunlight.

In the outskirts of Athens I saw a young potter turning an amphora, as beautiful as the most beautiful that was turned here in the days when Pericles was born in this very village. Once a truth has been discovered, we must forever bow to it. But we have only found a very little truth so far—we still have to seek and seek. . . .

(V.M.)

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Ozenfant, Amedée, 1886-1966
JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE. New York,
Macmillan, 1939.

Rebay

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